Chapter - 3

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS
Most of the stories of modern literature are character dominant. Naturally the stories of Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherji, and Salman Rushdie deal with human relationships. The protagonists in their stories struggle to establish good human relationships with their counterparts. Some succeed and some fail. Raja Rao's stories are all set in India and the characters are all Indian. In *The Policeman and the Rose*, Raja Rao quotes from Sri Atmananda Guru,

If one looks through the gross organ eye, gross forms alone appear.

The same relation between other gross organs and their objects. Leaving the physical organs if one looks through the subtle organs called mind, subtle forms appear. Looking through the attributeless pure, consciousness, and one sees consciousness only and nothing else.¹

Raja Rao's "Javni" presents the pathetic tale of a low caste widow, who is neglected by her own family, works in a middle class Brahmin family more for the affection she gets from the family than for money. Javni, though a low cast widow, establishes a good human relationship with her mistress. She and her mistress are bound by a bond of love. She presents the true image of an illiterate, simple, and credulous village woman in the pre-independence days. Narasingh Srivastava says,

The story centers in the picture of a world in which human relationships were still, are affected by the individualistic trends of the materialistic civilization of an industrialized society as much as it is grounded in the depiction of the miserable life of a widow whose husband belonged to a family which had a history of nothing but shame, poverty and quarrels, all borne by her to the last point of endurance.²
The unaffected relationship between Javni and her mistress develops into an emotional bond of love. The narrator’s sister is also so lovable and kind to Javni. Javni feels quite at home in her mistress’s house. Ramu the narrator, when he sees Javni sitting in the dark, swallowing a mouthful of rice in the cow’s shed, ventures to violate the religious rules by inviting her into the hall and eat her food in the hall. But his sister who is very affectionate towards Javni objects to his suggestion and she says, “Javni I am sure understands, my fears, my beliefs, men like Ramu can never understand... the practical and too irreligious. To us everything is mysterious our Gods, are not your Gods, your Gods are not our Gods. It is a simple affair” (TCB, 6)

These lines exhibit how the two have come to have a good understanding human relationship.

Another story in which we find well-established human relationships is “Akkayya.” In this story everyone needs Akkaya when she is hale and healthy but when she is bedridden everyone neglect and isolate her. Being childless she loves everyone and looks after all the newly born children in the big Hindu Brahmin family. She has nursed each and every child as if they are her own children in the household. Her relationship with the narrator is also warm. When she becomes sick she waits for him till she breathes her last breath. Even the narrator’s grandmother endears her prolonged illness happily. Akkayya on the other hand is also very happy in the family because, “There are always children to play with, girls to talk to, cows to milk, and the temples to go.”(TCB, 81)
She maintains good relationships with everyone in her sister’s family more than fifty years. As the narrator’s grandmother says, “She was happy as deer, but she could call none of the children her own and her motherly instinct remained unsatisfied to the end”. (TCB, 84)

Kittu’s grandmother and Naga a little orphan child looks after her well. Naga has to take her food, feed her, clean her bed, sweep the floor and sits listening to her sad stories. Kittu’s grandmother also reciprocates her goodness. She says,

All the morning I do nothing but wash her dirty clothes. We have two beds for her which we change from day to day, then wash her saris, take her to the bath, wash her myself, then taking her back we put her in her new bed... That is my life. (TCB, 89)

Though the narrator’s grandmother feels tiresome she never feels it burdensome because Akkayya has sacrificed her whole life for the sake of the family. As C.D. Venugopal says, “Akkayya can be taken for an idealistic portrayal of a humanitarian attitude so much desirable in human relationship.” 3

In another story “The True Story of Kanakapala, The Protector of Gold” Raja Rao weaves a story of a serpent which is sometimes a friend and sometimes a foe in Vision Rangappa’s family. It is the story of the relationship of the snake, Kanakapala with Rangappa. Considered to be the first man in the family, Rangappa collects money bit by bit and leads a life of celibacy, refusing every bride because he has vowed not to marry until he has seen the beautiful Kashi-Visweswara with his own eyes. During his pilgrimage on the banks of Himavathi he sees Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi who tell him to build a temple on the top of the hill and live there. Overnight Rangappa is turned into ‘vision Rangappa’, 83
and married the third daughter of Pandit Sivaramayya, and settled down in the village hiding his gold in a hole beneath the family sanctum. It is then Kanakapala the protector of gold, a three-striped cobra appears and curls on the gold. From that day onwards the snake guards the gold and becomes a good friend to Rangappa. Rangappa too treats it as his best friend and the protector of his gold. The relationship does not end with the death of Rangappa. It continues with the family till its death. After Rangappa’s death everyone becomes greedy except Sitharam, who is very pious and virtuous. While the first part elevates the relationship of the snake with the human the second part depicts the change of attitude in the members of the family. The greed for gold turns them into devils. As long as the members of the family of Rangappa are pious and virtuous, the snake Kanakapala remains a friend to the family, but when they become greedy and intend to grab the gold it becomes a foe to the whole family and bites and kills the people who try to snatch gold from the sanctum. Only Seetharam turns out to be obedient, respectful, and god-like when compared to his evil brothers and his crooked sister, Sita. In the relationship of the snake with Seetharam and in their enmity with other members of the family Raja Rao depicts the clash between the good and the bad. In the end both Kanakapala and Seetharam die because of the evil designs of his brothers and sister, the agents of evil. But their death leaves a curse on Rangappa’s house that no woman in the family shall never bear a child for nine months and bring it forth for the a benediction of Naga.

“The Little Gram Shop” is another story in which Raja Rao presents the relationship between the narrator Ananda an orphan boy, Beti Bai and Rati. Beti Bai is very kind towards orphans and she always tries to identify herself with Ananda. Money plays an important role
in the relationship of the protagonists. Motilal and his wife Beti Bai work hard and save pie by pie and start a gram shop. They begin to lend money to others on interest. Motilal and his wife quarrel a lot but only to reconcile the next moment. Whereas, Chota and his wife Rati have no such affectionate relationship. Chota often beats Rati mercilessly and one such beating makes her abort the baby. On the other hand Chota has been attached to Venku, a concubine. Every day Rati has to go to the cigarette shop of Venku to bring Chota home. She is disgusted with her husband and so she decides to live alone. “Of what use was all the money her husband had? What for? She had to patch her sari almost every week and she wear silver bangles instead of gold ones she has in childhood.” (TCB, 49)

She is then attacked by plague and is neglected by her father-in-law and dies. The death of her parents and the negligence of her brother are responsible for her miserable state. Beti Bai and Ananda are kind to Rati. Beti Bai though a mother-in-law has a good relationship with Rati, Ananda is also very kind to Rati, whereas, Chota and Motilal are hostile towards Rati. Raja Rao delineates various kinds of relationships within the family. The relationship that exists between the three Ananda, Beti Bai and Rati is purely humanistic in nature, whereas the relationship that exists among Motolal, Chota, and Venku of materialistic and inhuman. Their lives are like the ‘ parched desert where nothing green can grow or survive.’

Another story, “Companions” is about a snake. It describes the bond that exists between a snake and Moti Khan. The relationship between the two is symbolic of the relationship between the two religions, the Hinduism and Islam. In their previous births the snake was a pandit, Srinath Sastri, a worshipper of Goddess Lakshamma. When the Goddess offers him
two boons he has asked for a bagful of gold and the liberation from the cycle of birth and
death. The two boons are granted by the Goddess but he has to be born again as a serpent in
his next life before he gets liberation. Motikhan on the other hand was a Juggler and a basket
maker who lives with a concubine and fails to seek God. Therefore in his present life he has
to seek God or he has to die by his companion’s poisonous fangs. They have a
compassionate relationship with each other. When all is well both will live well and if
anything goes wrong the snake shall bite Motikhan. When Motikhan finds God at Fatapur
Sikri near the tomb of Sheikh Chistis, the snake too rejoices and, “flung round his neck,
slipped between his feet and curled round his neck and danced on his head, for when
Motikhan found God the sins would be worn out like the quern-stone with the grinding of
man, and there would be peace on all mankind.” (TCB, 172)

Motikhan then marries the daughter of Maulvi Mohammed Khan, who dies afterwards
and is buried in a tomb of black stone. Eleven months later Motikhan also dies and is buried
in a white marble stone tomb and a dome with the same stone is erected there. Three days
after the death of Motikhan the snake also dies and is buried near the Dargah and a clay tomb
is erected. Raja Rao here highlights the relationship between the three by immortalizing
them. They are elevated to the status of Gods in due course of time by the villagers.

Quite in contrast to Javni, Akkayya, Narsinga, or Narsa, the protagonist of the story
“Narsinga” though an orphan establishes good relationships with his master, Master’s
mistress, and his brother. “He achieves triumph of life’s vitality and unbalance over
orphanage, poverty and occasional beatings and other misfortunes.” 4 He is loved very much

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by his master, his wife, and his brother. He too is reciprocative of the kindness showed by his master and other members of the family. As he says in one context, “Master, Master I felt like it. You see, Master I love you, and you love me, Master and Auntie said your are a Mahatma’s man. And I love the mahatma too” (TCB, 106)

Narsa is a very playful and mischievous boy. He always plays with dogs and pulls the tails of cows and is daring enough to ride on the back of his aunt, who saves him and takes him to her house when his father and mother die of cholera and famine. She is very tall, thin and angry. She dislikes everyone and beats everyone and even her husband. But she is humane and very kind of Narsa. The Master’s wife is also very kind towards him and loves him very much. When he loses his shoes and wears a pair of shoes, which are three times bigger than his feet, she scolds him and asks him why he has not asked her for a new pair. Then Narsa says,

Mother, he began trembling; I can’t say. I saw that you gave a blanket to the old Mohammedan beggar; I saw that you gave a shirt to Barber Ranga, and Sampanna and Rajanna and all the people who live in our huts. Mother, you give milk for Chinnamma’s child and Ramamma’s child and I have seen you prepare woolen headgear for them. Mother, you are so good. How can you feed all?. (TCB, 109)

Narsa is so affected by the kindness of the Mistress that he does not want to be another burden to his Master. He thinks, “Why should Master give away things? Narsa earned eight annas from Sampanna and six annas from Rachanna. He took their sheep into the woods.”(TCB, 112-113) When Sampanna paid him the money with dues by the threatening
of Master’s brother he goes straight, “to the fair to buy his pair of slippers, a pie worth of Bengalgram and he bought something else that none saw and none knew, but the next morning everybody wondered who have stuck a paper flowers on the cradle stand.”(TCB, 110) He behaves like a grown up and wants to reciprocate the love, kindness, and generosity shown by his Master, by bringing a gift to the younger child of the Master.

In “Nimka”, Raja Rao presents a western character. Nimka is a beautiful Caucasian girl, who works in a restaurant. She looks like a young princess. She is very innocent and beautiful and kind to her pet cat. This quality of Nimka appeals to the narrator very much. So he thinks of marrying her. Soon he rejects the idea, as he feels that he does not have the qualities of a good husband who would suit Nimka. He thinks that there is a lot of difference between himself and Nimka. He always wants to be a good friend to Nimka. He establishes a good friendly relationship with her. Nimka too reciprocates. She even starts disliking Michel, a poet whom the narrator has introduced to her. In a weak moment the poet kisses her. She takes it as a mistake on her part to allow him to kiss her, as she thinks “It had to do with the flesh and she had to hide it from her mother. She decided then to marry, marry anyone.”(TCB, 102) She decides to marry anyone in order to overcome the sense of guilt in her heart for committing a mistake. She cannot marry the narrator because he is just like a Mahatma to her. She cannot even marry Michel because he has committed a sin by kissing her. At last she marries Count Virgilian Korma Flogs who runs a vegetarian restaurant. Soon he too leaves her as he goes in search of his fortune at another place. She is left with her son Michel, who in turn, leaves her. The last two stories “The Policeman and the Rose” and “India-a-Fable” have metaphysical connotations and explore different kinds of human
relationships. As M.K. Naik rightly comments on these stories thus, “Raja Rao’s stories are impressive explorations of the human condition as it shapes and is shaped by the varying textures of the human personality.”

In almost all the stories of Raja Rao the protagonists are successful in establishing good human relationships with their counterparts from different layers of the society. Just like them in the stories of Anita Desai, the protagonists try to establish good human relationships but all of her stories are tinged with pain and agony. The stories in fact highlight some of the subjects of her novels, viz, subjugation of innocence by brutal force, human relationships, problems of children and women.

The first story “Games at Twilight” presents the relationships among mothers and fathers and children. When the children yearn to go out into the verandah to play in a mid summer afternoon their mother bluntly refuses to send them out because she knows that her children are mischievous and as soon as they go out they forget their promise and rush out into the sunny open yard. But their father takes pity on the children because they are vexed with being indoors all the day. The children begin to push one another to play the game hide and seek. Motherly Mera, an elderly girl among the children intervenes and pulls them roughly apart ordering:

Make a circle, make a circle, she shouted firmly pulling and pushing till a kind of vague circle was formed ‘Now clap’ she roared and clapping they, they all chanted in melancholy unison; ‘Dip, dip, dip, my blue ship’ and every now and then one or the other saw he was safe by the way his hands fell at the
crucial moment- palm o palm, or back of and on palm- and dropped out of the circle with a yell and a jump of relief and jubilation. (GT, 3)

Anita Desai here presents a mother's love as revealed in safeguarding her children from the summer heat. After a while when Ravi begins to tap the earth with his foot saying that, “I won, I won, I won; he bawled, shaking his head so that the big tears flow, Raghu did not find me. I won, I won.” (GT, 9) The other children have already forgotten about him. They did so many things in his absence. They have been playing another new game since Ravi’s disappearance. Anita Desai succeeds in presenting beautiful parental relationships in this story.

In another story, “Private Tuitions by Mr. Bose”, Anita Desai presents the wife and husband relationship within the framework of the domestic life of Mr. Bose and his wife. Mr. Bose used to teach Sanskrit to Pritam, the son of a Brahmin priest. When he asks the boy to give the meaning of the word, ‘Asva’, the student expresses his inability to do so. Then he wonders how the child of a priest fails to explain the meaning of such a simple word. He even asks the boy to read the lines again and learn it properly, and does not admonish the boy immediately. Such is the concern of the master for the boy. Desai also presents the wife and husband relationship and the bliss, petty quarrels and reunions between the wife and husband beautifully in this story:

He nodded and sat down before his brass tray. She straightened it nervously, waved a hand over it as if to drive away a fly he could not see, and turned to the fire to fry hot purées for him, one by one, turning quickly to heap them on his tray so fast that he begged her to stop.
’Eat more’, she coaxed ‘One more’ – as though the extra puree were a peace offering following her rebellions of half an hour ago.

He too it with reluctant fingers but his moustache began to quiver on his lip as if beginning to wake up. ‘And you? He asked.’ Won’t you eat now?’

About her mouth, too, some quivers began to rise and move. She pursed her lips, nodded and began to fill her try piling up the purees in a now stack.

‘One more,’ he told her, ‘just one more,’ he teased, and they laughed. (GT, 19)

In “Studies in Park”, Desai describes the family relationships. The father is too much worried about his son’s getting of a degree and about his future. The mother worries about the health of her son. An affectionate bond of love binds them all. Suno, who is a unable to react positively to these affectionate appeals, realizes the real meaning of life only after seeing a scene 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 clack on the bench. Just then she lifted a plain thin hand and lifted her veil. I saw her face. It lay bared, in the black folds of her borkha, like a flower, wax-while, and composed, like a Persian lily or a tobacco flower at night...lay in the lap of a very old man. Very much older than her. With spectacles and long gray beard like goat’s or a scholar’s. He was looking down at her and caressing her so gently and tenderly. They stared at me but the man and the woman did not notice me. 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 by book, and wondered at them. She was ill, I could see, dying. Perhaps she had only a short time to live. (GT, 30)
This awakening from a monotonous life transforms his tenor of life. He gets a sense of liberation in that moment of shared love. Now his father’s repeated warnings to get a first class and the pleas of other members does not bother him much. On the other hand he begins to understand their concern now.

In another powerful story “Sales”, Anita Desai presents the relationship of a wife and husband and their child. The protagonist is an artist who supports his family by selling his paintings. The husband and wife have a harmonious relationship between them. The artist has to sell his paintings to support his family. The responsibility as the head of the family brings him to the level of a beggar. The relationships that exist in the middle class family is the predominant theme in this story.

In another story “Surface Textures”, the story begins from the point of view of Sheila, a devoted wife to Harish, who being preoccupied with observing the fine surface textures of the objects neglects his family and household duties. He can no longer maintain his job in the Government service and support his family. Everyone in the locality begin to call him a ‘hungry hyena’. One Mr. Bhatia also calls him ‘not human at all but like a hungry hunchbacked hyena hunting along the road’ His wife, Sheila is a kind woman and takes the responsibility of taking care of the children. She is angry against Harish’s ‘excessiveness’ and ‘pusillanimity’. She burst out on him on one occasion. The first few days she storms and screams against her husband like some shrill hurricane:

How am I to go to market and buy vegetables for dinner? I don’t even have enough for that. What am I to feed the boys tonight? No more milk for
These lines throw light on the chasm between the wife and the husband. She returns to her parents’ house when her husband fails to support the family. As a mother she automatically becomes the second choice in supporting the family. In this story, Desai presents the human relationships in a middle class family in the context of parental responsibility. Though Sheila’s character is not elevated in full, she represents ordinary humanity in the society. When her relationship with her husband does not go well she wants to reclaim her relationship with her parents for her bliss and happiness.

In the story, “The Accompanist” Desai explores the relationship between the Ustad and a young boy who feels thrilled at the prospect of becoming a tampura player to his master. The young boy’s father makes musical instruments and can also play several of them in a concert hall. All the musicians know him for his talent in making fine quality instruments. Mishraji, the young boy’s father makes a tampura to Ustad Rohim Khan. The young boy goes to the concert hall to present it. At that time the tampura player of Ustad is not found anywhere and the Ustad calls the young boy to play tampura in Raga Dipak. From that day onwards the young boy becomes his tampura player. Their relationship as Ustad and the accompanist continues. Anita Desai describes the relationship of the Ustad and the accompanist through the protagonist’s viewpoint:

Ours is a world formed and defined and enclosed not so much by music, however, as by a human relationship on solid ground level- the relationship of love. Not an abstract quality, like music, or an intellectual one, like art, but
a common human quality lived on an everyday level of reality-the quality of love. So I believe. What else is it that leaves us together as we play, so that I know every movement he will make before he himself does, and he can count on me to be always where he wants me? We never diverge; we leave and we arrive together. Is this not love? No marriage was closer. (GT, 59)

As R.S. Sharma comments aptly “The metaphysical leanings of Anita Desai are more compactly revealed in her short stories though such leanings tend to give them a touch of unreality. For instance the relationship between Ustad and his disciple in ‘The Accompanist’ is presented in a manner as to give the impression of a homosexual relationship.”

But Anita Desai sees the relationship as a kind initiation in which the affection of the initiator plays a significant role. She ignores the biological requirement of human relationships. The narrator says, “Play for me, and with these words he created me, created my life, gave it form and distinction and purpose. It was the moment of my birth and he was both my father and my mother to me. He gave birth to me, Bhaiyya, the tampura player.” (GT, 68) The young boy of fifteen is transformed into an accompanist. It is just like a rebirth to him, a second life offered to him by his Guru the Ustad. It leads to a kind of new awakening of life in him:

Before that I had no life. I was nothing a dirty, hungry street urchin, knocking about in the lane with other idlers and vagrants. I had played music only because my father made me, teaching me by striking me across the knuckles and pulling my ears for every mistake I made. I had stolen money and sweets from my mother. I was nothing. In addition, no one cared that I was nothing. It was Ustad Rahim Khan who saw me, hiding awkwardly in the shadows of an empty hall with a tampura in my hands, and called me to come
to him and showed me what to do with my life. I owe everything to him my very life to him. (GT, 68)

The passage reflects the reverence showered by the protagonist to his master.

“Devoted Son “is a fine and poignant story of a father and son relationship. Rakesh is a doctor of good reputation and known to be the devoted son of Mr. Sharma. He goes to America, does his M.D, and works in the most prestigious hospitals of U.S.A. and after earning a lot of money returns to India and constructs a big clinic of his own. Being a devoted son, he marries a girl selected by his mother.

As for his mother, she gloated chiefly over the strange fact that he had not married in America, had not brought home a foreign wife as all her neighbours had warned her he would, for wasn’t that what all Indian boys went abroad for? Instead he agreed, almost without argument, to marry a girl she had picked out for him in her own village, the daughter of a childhood friend, a plump and uneducated girl, it was true, but too old-fashioned, so placid, so complaisant that she slipped into the household and settled in like a charm, seemingly too lazy and too good-natured to dependent, as any other girl might have done. (GT, 72)

Mr. Sharma, Rakesh’s father, loses his wife and falls ill with a mysterious disease; Rakesh is the only person who looks after his father. Though for some time his wife takes care of her father-in-law, she is vexed with his peevish-whims. So nobody seemed to care for him except Rakesh:
protest of the father to take medicines leaves the reader to think whether the son is really justifiable in putting such rigorous restrictions of diet on old man’s life. Do we have to subject ourselves to all the constrains of life in order to live?” 7

In the story, “Pigeons at Daybreak” Desai describes the homely and affectionate relationship between an aged wife and her husband in a beautiful manner. Mr. Basu is an asthma patient. His wife Otima takes all steps to keep her husband comfortable in hot summer days. She reads the news to him and the news about the electricity cut increases breathlessness in Mr. Basu. She runs to the down stairs like a little girl to get the inhaler.

She puts the paper away and rose with a sigh of irritation and anxiety, the kind a sickly child arouses in its fired mother. She herself, at fifty-six had not a wrinkle on her oiled face, scarcely a gray hair on her head. As smooth as butter, as round as a cake, life might still have been delectable to her if it had not been for the asthma that afflicted her husband and made him seem, at sixty-one, almost decrept. ‘I ll bring you your inhaler. Don’t get worried, just don’t get worried,’ she told him and bustled off to find his inhaler and cortisone. (GT, 101)

Whenever there is power cut at night she requests her neighbour to carry the string cot up to the terrace so that he can get a comfortable sleep in the open air. But he is not comfortable, and he complains thus:

That his heavy body sank into it as into a hammock that the string cot into him, that he could not turn on that wobbling net in which he was caught like some dying fish gasping for a sir. It was no cooler than it had been indoors, he complained- there was not the slightest breeze, and the dust was stifling...Otima has lost her patience and lightheartedness that had come to
her with this unaccustomed change of scene. She tired of dragging around the pillows and piling up the bolsters, helping him into a sitting position and then lowering him into a horizontal one, bringing him his medicines, fanning him with a palm leaf and eventually of his groans and sobs as well. Finally she gave up and collapsed into her own string bed, lying there exhausted and sleepless, too distracted by the sound of traffic to sleep.

This passage distinctly throws light on the genuine concern of the wife for her husband. Otima is too patient and traditional in looking after her sick husband. Desai here presents how the power cut in the city plays an important role in affecting the lovely relationship of the husband and wife. It very much worries the wife, who always takes too much care about the health of husband.

In the second volume of stories, **Diamond Dust**, Desai presents stories set in India, U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The underlying complexity of human mind is the theme of all these stories. In the story “Winterscape” Anita Desai portrays the affectionate relationship between two sisters, Anu and Asha. The two sisters love each other so much right from their childhood. Asha the eldest daughter in the family looks after the whole household work.

While Asha proved a natural housekeeper and joined, with gusto, in the cooking, the sweeping, all those household tasks shared between the women, pinning her chunnie back behind her ears, rolling up the sleeves of her kameez and settling down to kneading the dough or pounding spices, or rolling out chapattis with a fine vigor, Anu proved sadly incompetent...and was too weak to haul up a full bucket of water from the well, needing to do it half a bucket at a time... ‘Look at your sister,’ she was always counseled, and she did, raising her eyes, gave her a wink and slipped her one of the snacks or
sweets she had missed. Anu understanding grew between them, strengthened by strand upon strand upon strand of complicity. (DD, 28)

The affectionate relationship between the two sisters is beautifully projected in the above passage. Though their father allows them to go to school quite against the advice of the elders their education does not turn up successfully. While the household work interrupted Asha in understanding the problems in Mths Anu is dull in solving the problems. Their struggles with the studies come to an end when Asha turns fifteen and the family finds her a bridegroom and marries her off. But Anu has to stay at home to help her mother and other male children in the family. Even after marriage Asha cannot do anything without Anu, so she is often asked to come and stay with her. Even as a series of miscarriages and stillborn babies bother Asha she makes preparations for the wedding of her sister with a clerk in a neighboring village. Soon she gives birth to a male child. This is a happy occasion even in the house of Asha. Soon she becomes the caretaker of both the baby and Anu.

Anu too is so affectionate towards her sister that when Asha’s husband dies she leaves her son to Asha quite against the protests from her husband’s side. She decides to give away her son to Asha, thinking that she needs her son more than herself with the hope that she can give birth to another child. It is the only choice left to her to keep her sister happy. But soon a dreadful disease takes her husband away. She does not worry much about it but goes to her sister. There after they both become Ma, Masi to little Rakesh. They keep this bond till the end of the story. In the words of Rakesh their relationship runs thus:
They understood each other. Ma looked after me—she cooked for me and fed me, made me sit down on mat and sat in front of me and fed me with her own hands. In addition, what a cook she is! Beth, you’ll love—'he broke off, knowing he was going too far, growing foolish now, ‘And Masi,’ he recovered himself, ‘she took me by the hand to school. In the evening, she lit the lamp and made me show her my books. She helped me with my lessons—and I think learned with me. She is a reader, Beth, like you,’ he was able to say with greater confidence.

(DD, 35)

There was no scope for jealousy among them in looking after the child; as they shared their duties with each other. Whatever the first does the second does not interfere and vice versa. This understanding between the two amazes Beth the wife of Rakesh and she expresses her eagerness to see them both in person. When both the sisters go to London to look after their grand son, Beth understands them well but cannot bear with their too much interference in taking care of the baby. She does not understand the old ways of bringing up a child. So she requests Rakesh to send them back home. Nevertheless, before that, both Asha and Anu understand the situation and request Rakesh to send them back to India. The two sisters remain beloved sisters till the end. The sisterly relationship is well established in this story.

Desasi’s another story “Diamond Dust” deals with an unusual relationship between Mr. Das and his pet dog, Diamond. To Mrs. Das it is a ‘shaitan’. But to Das it is a ‘Diamond’. He says of the dog, “The dog had been Diamond ever since he had bought him, as a puppy of an indecipherable breed, blunt-faced, with his wet nose gleaming and paws flailing for action. Mr. Das could not explain how he had come upon that name. (DD, 50) Though Mr. Das’s friends’ ridicule his calling the dog a Diamond, a black Diamond and they
themselves called him ‘coal’, ‘Koyla.’ When for the first time Diamond is brought into the house Mr. Das asks his wife to get warm milk, and warns her not to boil the milk more. Mrs. Das angrily says that he does not fetch any milk to feed his own children. He is too attached to the dog and the dog too treats him just like his father as it comes and complains against the chipmunks:

Only in the Lodi Gardens did he dare slip Diamond off his leash for the joy of seeing him race across that lawn after chipmunks that scurried up trees, furiously chattering and whisking their tails in indignation while Diamond sat at the foot of the tree, whining, his eyes lustrous with desire. 'Diamond, Diamond,' Mr. Das would call, and lumbering up to him, would fondle his head, his ears and murmur words of love to entice him away from the scolding creatures in the leaves. (DD, 52)

They are too much obsessed with each other. Mr. Das likes it too much, more than he does his children. When Mrs. Das protests against giving him meat and fish, he himself brings it from the butchers shop the meat and serves it affectionately. He plays with the dog, irritates his colleagues. The real disaster comes when Diamond grows into a young one and chases after the bitch on the roads. In every season in the month of November Mr. Das had to use new chains and stronger ones to tie him in the compound. But they are of no use. Every time Mr. Das has to search for the Diamond calling his name aloud and after he is found it is his duty to wash him and make him a domestic dog. The dog’s last escapade leaves him exhausted, jaded, and even brings his doom. He runs madly across the road when he sees the diamond behind the bars of the van, in which all the stray dogs are howling,
Diamond! They will kill my Diamond! Passerby heard him shriek in a voice unrecognizably high and sharp, and they saw the small man in his tight brown coat, his woolen cap and muffler, dash down his market bag in the dust, and chase the van with a speed no one would have thought possible. He sprang at its retreating back, hanging there from the bars for a horrid moment, and as the van first braked, then jerked forward again, fell, fell backwards, onto his back, so that his head struck the stones in the street, and he lay there, entirely still, making no sound or movement at all. (DD, 63)

This is the best example of an unusual relationship that exists between a man and a dog. But Mr. Das's attachment to Diamond is genuine as is his grief, when Diamond disappears. As Maggie Ball observes, "The story is billed as a tragedy, and it rises the kind of question good tragedy always does who is right? Who is wrong? Is love end in itself? Or is the tragedy in the delusion, the miss-placed adoration". 8

In the story, "Underground" Desai presents the relationship between wife and husband, between Jack Huggins and Meg and also between Bob McTaggart and Helen. Though the story begins with Jack Huggins and Meg and ends with them the whole story deals with the relationship of Bob with his wife, Helen. Bob is an engineer and his wife is a heart patient. After her surgery he quits his job to look after his wife. He does not want to bother about his job. His only aim in life is to see his wife feel comfortable "After the surgery, bringing her here to recover, he had felt the seams of his life, at fist so drastically emptied by the news, filling out with his need of her, the comfort of her existence.(DD, 75)

When Bob is sent to Iraq on duty he feels the need for a good hotel. He later purchases the white house and converts it into a "White House Hotel" to provide rented accommodation to
the tourists who visit the seashore in summer. But the failing health of Helen does not allow him succeed in that business. Bob does not want to cause any inconvenience to his wife. First they give accommodation to a couple with children, but that does not turn out to be a successful venture because it creates a lot of disturbance for Helen. His desire to provide good accommodation to worried tourists is not fulfilled as it interfered with his keenness to not to disturb his ailing wife.

Perhaps that was why they had never made a success out of the While House Hotel; they hadn’t really cared, couldn’t really bother. They should have; they needed something to work out, to provide, when he threw up his job and brought her to the seaside, somehow believing they could flee the curse that had fallen upon them in the city. Like desperate refugees from the plague, they had also been pilgrims, voyaging in the belief that somewhere lay safety. (DD, 75)

He takes too much care of his wife. But he is the most unfortunate husband that he has not kept his promise to his wife. He mourns for her and after her death he does not want to have any visitor to his White House Hotel. He does not want to be disturbed his solace in solitude. He always feels his wife’s presence with him. His musings describe how he loves his wife. Hower Edward sums up his affectionate bond with his wife:

Once he intruded upon a happy young couple playing with their child, and the recollection haunts him as he recalls being interrupted by guests at his hotel while trying to take care of his dying wife. Now he goes back to the terrace where he used to feed Raccoons with her everything and finds that they are her consolation, a means to rescue in his mind the domestic peace he enjoyed so briefly with his wife. 9
Thus most of the stories of Anita Desai deal with human relationships, the relationships between parents and children, between wife and husband and between animals and human beings as in the case of the title story “Diamond Dust”. Though some protagonists fail to establish good relationships most of them succeed in maintaining good human relationships.

While the protagonists of RajaRao and Anita Desai try to establish good human relationships with their counterparts, the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee also try to establish good human relationships with their counterparts unsuccessfully. In her two volumes of stories Darkness, and The Middleman and Other Stories Bharati Mukherjee presents the relationships between men and women, between father and children, between wife and husband. Except for a few most of the protagonists of these stories fail to establish good human relationships. In the story ”Angela”, the protagonist struggles hard to establish a good relationship with Dr. Menezies, who loves her very much and wants to marry her. But Angela who is positive towards his proposal changes her opinion when she is tempted by Dr. Menezines in Dalia’s room. The story also reveals the affectionate relationship between Dalia and Orin. Orin loves Dalia very much and he always wants to be with her. He is very much worried about her recovery from illness. Dalia is in coma after an accident. Though Dr. Menezies tells the truth about the condition of Dalia, Orin does not want to believe them. He screams, “We shouldn’t be just standing around and chattering,” he shouts. “We are chattering in front of her as though she’s dead.” (D, 14)

He used to enquire Angela about his love for Delia. He is very eager to know whether she will permit him to can call her affectionately, an ‘angel’. Though Angela’s marriage to Dr.
Menezies fails, Delia proves to be successful in having good human relationship with Orrin even on her deathbed.

Mukherjee’s second story, “The Lady from Lucknow” with an ironical theme presents the relationship of Nafeeza Heifeez with an old man, Bhemish. Nafeeza is disgusted with the traditions and customs and traditional marriages because of the death of Hussein, a neighboring girl, who loves a Hindu. Though her marriage is successful somehow her desire to fall in love remains in her heart. After her marriage to Mr. Iqubal, she is transported to America along with her husband. Her desire to fall in love persists even in America since she cannot forget her childhood experience. As she says, “I have fancied myself in love many times since, but never enough for the emotions to break through tissue and muscle. Hussein’s torn heart remains the standard of perfect love.” (D, 24) It instigates her to develop an illegal adulterous irrational relationship with Bhemish aged sixty-five. As A.V. Krishna Rao says:

The significance of the story lies not in the theme of adultery, per se, but in the juxtaposition of repressive cultural orthodoxy and permissive cultural heterodoxy... The message seems to be loud and clear: the cloistered virtue due to one’s excessive cultural conditioning is always vulnerable. She is finally sent back to her beautiful deckhouse by a cab. 10

Mukherjee’s fictional intention in this story seems to be to create an ironically double-edged situation; one on the cultural, ethical level and the other on the personal moral level.

In many of the stories in Darkness the protagonists are Indian women either married to Indian men or having affairs with American men. In the story “A Father” Mukherjee presents
the protagonist Mr. Bhowmic who always wants to have good relationships with American people and even wants to settle down there. He too wants to get a good American husband for his daughter, Babli, an Electrical Engineer. But quite against this wish Babli becomes pregnant by artificial insemination because she does not want to have any marital relationships with men. She even does not think of having sexual relationships with any man. Mr. Bhowmic on the other hand is a hypocrite. He wants to be a true American and at the same time has enormous belief in Indian sentiments. So he wants just to have a superficial relationship with Americans and wants to be a true Indian sentimentally. This is shown clearly when he throws a rolling pin at his daughter in a fit of anger when he hears the news of her pregnancy, through artificial insemination, quite against the custom. Because he does not want to deviate from the tradition of marriage, he wants to get his daughter married whether it is with an Indian or an American. He wants to maintain good human relationships with others. Babli on the other hand has no faith in such relationships. She is vexed with the Indian way of finding a suitable groom for a bride. Her mother does not approve of getting a baby without a marriage.

Yes, yes, yes," she screamed, “like livestock. Just like animals. You should be happy- that’s what marriage is all about, isn’t it? 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 mad woman. (D, 73)

Mukherjee’s protagonists are particularly men who are really bothered about their relationships with their homelands as in the case of Dr. Manny Patel, a psychiatrist doctor. This longing for the old land and the old ways bothers him. This also creates hollowness in his relationship with his wife Camille who has grown up in Camden New Jersey. Though he
fails to be a good husband to Camille he wants to prove himself to be a good and affectionate father to his son and also a responsible son to his parents. He always wants to work hard and save money to keep his son comfortable. He always thinks of converting every dollar into a rupee to become a millionaire so that he can look after his parents well.

He should go back to India. He should look after his parents. Out of a sense of duty to the goodness, if not out of love for his father. Money, luxuries; he could have both in India, too. When he had wanted to go to John Hopkins for medical training, his parents had loved him enough to let him go. They loved him the same intense, unexamined way he loved his own boy. He had let them down. (D, 100)

But unfortunately he fails to fulfill his dream. He is so unfortunate that he neither proves to be a good son to his parents nor a good father to his only son, Shawan, because he divorces his wife Camilla, who takes the boy along with her. Moreover he loses his parents even before he leaves for India.

In the story “Saints”, which is perhaps a continuation of the story “Nostalgia”, Mukherjee delineates the struggle of Shawan in establishing a good relationship with his mother’s lover, Mr. Mayne. The whole story describes the moorings of Shawan and his loving relationship with his father and how the things go wrong between his father and mother, which lead to the separation of both. He always longs to have his father with him because he is a very good man:

Dad’s really very generous. He sends money to relatives and to Indian orphanages. He’s generous but practical. He says he doesn’t want to send me stuff—cashmere sweaters and Ultrasuede jackets, the stuff he likes—
that’ll end up in basement cedar closets... I ask for computer games, video cassettes, nothing major. Therefore, twice a year Dad sends big checks. Dad’s really generous with me. It makes him feel the big benefactor, Mom says, whenever a check comes in the mail. But that’s only because things went really bad two years ago. They sent me away to boarding school, but they still couldn’t work things out between them. (D, 147)

He does not like his mother’s relationship with Wayne. Also he does not approve of others calling his mother Mila, a shortened name he has given to her. Mukherjee presents the life of Shawan as an example of a partly perverted child in whose case the perversion is caused by the dissolution of wife and husband relationship between Mr. Manny Patel and Camille. But Shawan Patel is little fortunate to have his father’s affection, which saves him from becoming totally perverted.

In the second volume of short stories The Middleman and Other Stories deal with energetic and diverse immigrants who alter the North American mosaic. Mukherjee presents the protagonist’s relationship with America and American milieu. The protagonists of Mukherjee are shown to be trying to establish good relationships with others.

In the story, “The Middleman” Mukherjee presents the narrator Alfie Judah, a macho-operator and his relationship with Maria, who ‘comes with ranch, or with the protection. Though the story starts with Alfie, it delineates the life of Maria and her plight with men in the world of smugglers. When she was young she has been taken away by Gutridze and later Clovis T. Ransom has taken her from him. When the time comes she kills Ransom.T.Clovis and Bill Wilkins and marries her schoolmate with whom she has been in love. Her relationships with Alfie, Ransom-I Cloves, and Bill Wilkins are only results of her
helplessness. Finally she wants to settle down with her schoolmate Andrews. Alfie puts his relationship with Maria as, "I'm no hero I calculate margins, I couldn't calculate the cost of a night with Maria, a month with Maria, though for the first time in my life; it was a cost. I might have borne." (TM, 16)

Most of the Asian women in Mukherjee's stories are willing to drop husband and family to pursue a dream they desire passionately, but many of their American counterparts seem not only to lack passion but they seem willing to give up almost everything in order to minimize the disturbance in their lives.

In the story "A Wife's Story" Panna Butt leaves India for America to get her Ph.D degree. But in America she finds more freedom and so she decides not to go back to India. She is vexed with the ways of her husband, Mr. Butt. He is a suspicious man as she says, "He looks disconcerted. He's used to a different role; He's the knowing, suspicious one in the family. He seems to be sulking and finally he comes out with it." (TM, 33) She also feels ridiculous in front of Imre, her friend from Hungary, whom she meets in a seminar. Throughout his stay in America she feels uncomfortable with the suspicious behaviour of her husband. Quite in contrast to Panna Butt is Charity Chin, her roommate, who is in modeling business. Though estranged from her husband Eric, she loves him in spite of knowing that he always wanted only her money. "He wants me to pay off the rent on his loft for last spring. He asked me to move back, remember? He begged me. (TM, 30) She even ignores the comment made by Panna on Eric. In her own words:
It isn’t the money,” Charity says. Oh? I think. “He says he still loves me. Then he turns around and asks me for five hundred. What is so strange about that, I want to ask. She still loves Eric and Eric, red jump suit and all is smart enough to know it, Love is a commodity, hoarded like any other. Mamet knows. But I say, “I am not the person to ask about love”. (TM, 30)

These lines show how she yearns to reestablish a good relationship with her husband. In stories like 'Loose Ends’, ‘Orbiting’, ‘Fighting for Rebound”; we find amicable relationships between Americans and Asian immigrants. In “Loose Ends Jeb, the narrator, longs for the old Florida which his old pappies and grannies liked. The America he sees in the motel room is actually more like the America for which he becomes nostalgic. The problem is, Jeb cannot renarrate what ‘we the people’ (the Americans) might look like. He expresses his hostility towards Asian Immigrants, “They’ve forgotten me, I feel left out, left behind, while we were nailing up that big front door, these guys were sneaking in around back, They got their money, their family’s network and their secretive languages.”(TM, 53) Mukherjee’s immigrants,

Have darker skins which make it more difficult for them to slip unnoticed into the mainstream of American life., but they are also better educated and more sophisticated than the average Americans which means they are better prepared to defend themselves against those who demand conformity. Unlike earlier immigrants who quietly acquiesced to their Americanization they insist on entering the new world on their own terms. They want more than mere toleration; they want the best their adopted land has to offer. 12

Jeb’s disgust with big families can be seen at the motel room where the motel girl relents to the scorn. While Jeb fails to establish good human relationships with the immigrants, Ranata
in ‘Orbiting’ struggles to establish her relationships with Rodham, a refugee from Afghanistan. When Rindy introduces Ro to her father, they look at him as an expatriate. She watches her father and brother-in-law, Brent reacts with an instinctive prejudice towards Ro and realizes that they are unable to imagine that a foreigner, especially an Asian, can be more cultured and experienced than they are. Rindy tries to support him by saying that he love squash and did not understand American sports. She glowingly describes her newfound familiarity with things like halal, whole nutmeg, Pashto words, and the difference among the Afghan tribes. She makes his stories hers and also passionately compares him with Clint Eastwood, a movie star. She wants to change him according to her wish. She says, “I realize all in a rush how much I love this man with his blemished, tortured body. I will give him citizenship if he asks” (TM, 74) Rindy tries to understand Ro’s masculinity that transforms him into a familiar American hero. Therefore, Rindy struggles to establish comprehensibility with Ro.

In the story, “Fathering” Mukherjee presents the family relationships in an American family. Jason decides to search for his Vietnamese daughter, Eng. As a good father he takes the responsibility of his daughter in curing her illness. When Eng screams in delirium about her grandmother whom she loves very much and dreams of the food she gets her. Jason keeps away from her. He is not daring enough to touch her. He simply listens to her delirium chat, and reads comics to her just like a good father:

I read to her because good parents are supposed to read to their kids laid up sick in bed. I want to do it right. I want to be a good father. I read from a sci-fi novel that Sharon must have picked up. She works in a cinema store in
He tries to cope up, with his daughter and his lover, Sharon. "I want to comfort Sharon, but my daughter with the wild, grieving pygmy face won't let go of my hand, "She's bad, Dad. Send her back." (T.M.p.123) Sharon doesn't like Eng because Eng wants to possess her father to herself. She always wants her father be on her side and she hates Sharon and requests him to send her away. At last Jason takes his daughter to the Doctor. When he gets a phone call from the doctor to go to his house immediately, he feels miserable for he is unable to keep up his relationship with his wife and his 'alien child'. The Doctor says,

> It is none of my business, Jason, but you and Sharon might try an honest-to-goodness heart to heart." Then he makes a sign to me to lie E on the examining table. "We don't look so bad," he says to my daughter. Then he excuses himself and goes into a glass-walled cubicle. (TM, 123)

Jason struggles hard to establish a good relationship with his wife and daughter, but at the end he wants to be just a good father. Then Sharon, vexed with his ways leaves him. As she says, "See I told you the child was crazy. She hates me. She's possessive about Jason." (T.M.p.124) Jason on the other hand wants to remain a good father to his daughter Eng. Their relationship now turns up as a soldier and child relationship.

Then, as in fairy tales, I know what has to be done. Coming partner! I whisper. I got no end of coins. I jiggle the change in my pocket. I jerk her
away from our enemies. My Saigon kid and me: we're a team. In five minutes we'll be safely away in the cold chariot of our van. (TM, 124)

While the American protagonists in her American stories try to establish good relationships with Asian men and women, their counterparts, similarly the Asian women want to abandon their counterparts in the process of their assimilation with America, and American ways. In "Tenant" Maya Sanyal fails to establish good relationship with her American counterparts, because she is tired of dealing with the prejudices and deficiencies of American men. Maya Sanyal lands in U.S. with her books and clothes in a small truck from Carolina. The Irony is that she only takes and does not give anything to others. So she cannot establish meaningful human relationships with any body. Her plight is like that of 'Trishanku' suspended between the orient and the accident. She has a broken marriage behind her.

She does not know what has happened to her student husband and after that she never tries to have any relationship with men. When she meets Dr. Rao Chatterjee she tries to establish good relationship with him and his family. But when she is invited to his house for tea, his wife's behavior, and Rao's behavior irritate her. She does not like the disgusting behaviour of Chatterji. She feels that she is not fit and suitable to marry Ashok, a prospering bachelor in America who has given an advertisement for a suitable bride, because of her past life. She thinks in heart of hearts that her relationship with Ashok Mehta cannot even begin. Then she is asked to vacate her house as the landlord Ted is getting married. She shifts to a new room. Her present landlord is Fred. He has two sons, an ex-wife in Des Moines. He is self-reliant. He goes for shopping, carries the garbage, and does every thing like a normal man. Maya feels comfortable with Fred and wants to remain with him. But as soon as she gets a
phone call from Ashok she wants to leave Fred. Thus the Asian alien women are incapable of establishing good human relationships with their counterparts. They will not have any permanent relationship with anyone.

Quite in contrast to Maya Sanyal, Jasmine successfully establishes good relations with the American family. Jasmine is a young Trinidadian woman who has been smuggled illegally into the U.S. She is helped by Mr. & Mrs. Daboos in finding work in Bill Muffett's family. When Lara is away with her performing group Jasmine finds an opportunity to establish her relationship with Bill. She cleans, cooks, and irons Muffett’s clothes and she always thanks Jesus for giving such a nice, small, and friendly family. Lara is away with her performing Troup. Jasmine is in charge of the house and Lara likes her very much and has too much faith in her. She says thus: “I think I’m going to like you, Jasmine. You have something about you. A something real special. I’ll best bet you’ve acted haven’t you.”(TM, 132) Jasmine always feels at home, in the absence of Lara with Bill.

In the early evenings Jasmine cooked supper, something special she hadn’t forgotten from her island days. After supper she and Muffie watched some TV, and Bill read. When Muffie went to bed, Bill and she stay together for a bit with their glasses of Soave. Bill, Muffie, and she were a family, almost.

(TM, 136)

Thus Jasmine is a successful protagonist, who establishes a good human relationship with the Muffetts. She forgets all the dreariness of her past life.
In “Buried Lives”, Mr. Venkatesan is forced to establish good relationships with Queenie. Mr. Venkatesan is transported to Hamburg to earn money and to provide comforts to his large family. He had a large family to look after “He had parents, one set of grandparents, an aunt who hadn’t been quite right in the head since four of her five boys had signed up with that tigers, and three much younger unmarried sisters.” (TM, 154)

So he departs from Sri Lanka to Canada with a passport ‘impressive with fake visas’. He goes in the bottom of a fisherman’s dinghy to India and later to Tashkent, Moscow, and East Berlin and Hamburg. When he reaches Hamburg he falls a victim to a ship’s captain. Mr. Rammi saves him and takes him to his cousin Queenie, who runs a boarding house for in transit aliens. She explains to Venkatesan how her grandfather came to the Caribbean. By the time he gets his documents he realizes that he is running fifty and at that age one has to stop running. He thinks of staying back with Queenie. Her daughter’s Kleptomania forces him to develop a relationship with Queenie because she is the woman who saves him from being arrested by the police.

Mr. Venkatesan thought about the swoops and darts of his fate. He had started out as a teacher and a solid citizen and ended up as a lusty criminal. He visualized fate now as a buzzard. He could hear the whir of fleshy wings. It hopped off a burning car in the middle of a Trinco intersection. (TM, 175)

He wants to marry Queenie and remain in Hamburg as a faithful husband to her and a father to Queenie’s daughter. His relationship is instigated by the necessity to escape from imprisonment.
Thus most of the Asian protagonists of Bharathi Mulkherjee fail to establish good human relationships with their counterparts, while the American sneered in establishing good relationships with the alien Asians.

While the stories of Mukherjee deal with the plight of the people from Asian countries in the West, the stories of Salman Rushdie in *East West* have the backdrops of both the eastern and western countries. The protagonists of Salman Rushdie run between India and London. As Robert Coover says, “This sometimes poignant and intimate, sometimes boisterously inventive, sometimes gently provocative collection of short stories, formally wide ranging though it is, is structured as a tight little syllogism.”13 There are exactly nine stories, three in each section. “All the stories in this volume deal with people who are, on one way or other caught up in the conflicts and confluences of inhabiting the border land between two worlds.”14

Rushdie believes that there are tolerance, compassion and love at every heart. But there is a danger of homogenizing western and Muslim points of view, setting up crude binaries, the West versus Islam and constructing a monolithic Muslim identity. But it is a known fact that the Western liberal and the devout Islam and their conflict are discernible.

The conflict is compounded by being entangled in national and international politics. Khomeini’s motives were, mixed. Within Iran his edict was a method of uniting competing factions, the pragmatists (like Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, then the Speaker, and Ali Akbar Velayati, then the Foreign Minister.) who were advocating for better relations with the West and the radicals who believed that mending ties with the west was
In his short stories set in the east, the protagonists are Indians and Pakistanis. All of them try to have human relationships with their counterparts. In the first story “Good Advice is Rarer than Rubies” Rehana wants to remain in Pakistan instead of leaving for England. She has been exploited by an oldman Muhammad Ali, who always selects only women to frighten with his words. But to Rehana he wants to give free advice and even handover her the stolen passport. But Rehana refuses to accept the passport and deliberately bungles the interview at the Consulate because she doesn’t want to be a wife of an old man who is twenty-five years senior to her. She knows about him only through telephone calls. She tells about how she has got married to her old husband Ali.

It was an arranged engagement; Miss Rehana said all at once, ‘I was nine years old when my parents fixed it. Mustafa Dar was already thirty at that time, but my father wanted someone who could look after me as he had done himself. Mustafa was a man known to Daddyji as a solid type. Then my parents died and Mustafa Dar went to England and said he would send for me. That was many years ago. I have his photo, but he is like a stranger to me. Even his voice, I do not recognize it on the phone. (EW, 14) This surprises Ali but he says that parents always act right “One’s parents act in one’s best interest. They found you a good and honest man who has kept his word and sent for you. And now you have a lifetime
to get to know him, and to love."(EW, 14) But Rehana is quite averse to re-establish her relationship with her husband. She is more comfortable with the children for whom she has been working as Ayah for all these years. In her own words, “Now I will go back to Lahore and to my job. I work in a great house, as ayah to three good boys. They would have been sad to see me leave.”(EW, 15) Though her status is degraded from that of a beautiful wife of a wealthy man to that of a house servant, ‘ayah’, she feels comfortable in Pakistan rather than in England. Her relationship with the house of her master’s children is stronger than her relationship with her husband.

The story, “A Free Radio” is set in India. It projects the unusual relationship of a Rickshawalah with the wife of a thief with five children. It is the story about how self-deception is resorted to as an aid to happiness. The woman is ten years older than Ramani. The narrator of the story is a retired teacher, who is a well-wisher of all, in particular, the Rickshawalah Ramani. In the narrator’s opinion Ramani’s love for the widow is foolish and idiotic, because he has no-good opinion about the widow:

She called out: ‘Hey! Rickshaaa! Loud, you know, like a truly cheap type. Showing us she can afford to ride in rickshaws, as if anyone interested. Her children must have gone hungry to pay for the ride but in my opinion it was an investment for her, because must-be she had decided already, to put her hooks into Ramani. (EW, 21)

The narrator’s concern for the Rickshawallah is something to do with his sense of social awareness. He feels sad for Ramani when he sees him with his bad friends, who are taken to drinking cheap liquor, behind an Irani hotel because he knows his parents very well.
Tempted by the flattery of his arm-band friends Ramani dreams of getting into the films. The narrator gets angry and wants to warn the widow when he learns that the widow also has been encouraging Ramani to join movies. Even he does not like to call her by name. He calls her out as, the thief’s widow. But she retaliates immediately thus:

Let me tell you, mister teacher sahib retired, that your Ramani has asked to marry me and I have said no, because I wish no more children, and he is a young man and should have his own. So told that to the whole world and stop your cobra poison. (EW, 24)

From that day onwards he shuts his eyes to their affair because he feels that he had done what all he could do to save Ramani from the clutches of the widow. But he becomes angry and almost weeps when he hears the news of the ‘Nasbandi’. Ramani sells his rickshaw and leaves for Bombay because he wants to become a big actor like Amitab Bachan and Shashi Kapoor. The teacher thinks that Ramani alone is leaving for Bombay. But he is crestfallen when Ramani tells him that he is leaving for Bombay with his wife and five children. Ramani is such a kind hearted man that he does not want to desert the thief’s widow and her five children. After some months the teacher receives a letter from Ramani saying that Ramani has succeeded in becoming a film actor. But the teacher is convinced that whatever Ramani has written in the letter are his delusions. Rushdie evokes sympathy for the narrator, because he was so concerned about Ramani that he could not bear to hear of the doom of Ramani.

The final story in the section East, “The Prophet’s Hair” is set in Kashmir. In the 1960s a relic of the prophet’s hair was stolen from a mosque in Kashmir and then it was found. This
was authenticated by the thieves and the holy men of the place. Rushdie imagines about the panicking efforts of the thieves to get rid of the hair. The second purloining takes place before the final restoration. This gives a wide scope for Rushdie to weave a story. In this story the second thief of the prophet’s hair is a moneylender, Hashim. He does it not for the religious reasons but to add to his collection of antiques. Under this influence the happy and lovable and comfort-enduring secularism in the house is changed into harsh fundamentalism. Rushdie delineates in detail how the hair has disturbed the familial relationships in the house of Hashim.

Six days before the entry of the relic everything in the house was perfect. Hashim is an honest man. He used to lend money at 70% to teach the people about the value of money. “Let them only learn that, and they will be saved of this fever of borrowing all the time – so you see that if my plans succeed, I shall put myself out of business”(EW, 41) There was always a healthy atmosphere around the breakfast table. But when he comes to possess the relic hair he becomes religious fanatic to the detriment of the family’s peace of mind. Earlier he had encouraged his daughter in every respect and was also very kind towards her, but now he accuses her of lasciviousness

Not only does he start praying for five times but also forces the children and wife to follow suit. He also burns all the books except the “Quran”. He even assaults his wife, son Atta, and daughter. To save their family from the influence of the relic Huma, his daughter and his son, Atta decide to hire a thief to steal the relic from his father. But unfortunately on the day of burglary Atta who is in coma screams and dies. Hashim by mistake thrusts a
dagger through his daughter and knowing that he has killed his daughter he turns it upon him. His wife by seeing all these things becomes mad. The thief is killed and his four sons on the next day get back their lost legs and lose their livelihood but the only benefactor of the relic is the thief's wife. She is restored with the lost eyesight. Thus the prophet's hair plays an important role in reversing the relationships in the house of Hashim and that of the thief and his family.

The second part of the volume has stories based on Western culture. In "Yorick", "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers", "Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate their Relationship", Rushdie presents three different icons of the Western culture, Hamlet, The Wizard of the Oz, and Christopher Columbus. The first story "Yorick" is a convolute, retelling of the famous play Hamlet by a disgruntled jester. It is reinvented in a monologue centered on Yorick. The narrator himself disposes it as a cock and bull story. Bruce King rightly comments: "Yorick offers a version of Hamlet in a mixture of pseudoancient style, in which the king is poisoned by a son who is sexually attracted to his mother and is punished by his angry father." 16

In the second story "At the Auction of The Ruby Slippers" Rushdie offers in parable form, how society idolizes fame and money to hide an underlying vacuum and how the materialistic West has little reason to feel morally superior to the fundamentalist East. In the later part of the story he presents his fictitious relationship with his cousin Gale and why he wants to possess the Ruby Slipper. He thinks: "Gale duped me I was bitter and would reveal
to our social circle that she had lost virginity at the age of fourteen in an accident involving
defective shooting-stick; but vindictiveness did not satisfy me for long.”(EW, 95)

But after many years he sees her on the T.V screen lamenting over the astronaut stranded
on Mars without any hope of rescue and with diminishing supplies of food and good
breathable air. The narrator, “resolved at once to buy them, whatever the cost. My plan was
simple; I would offer the miracle-shoes to Gale in all humility. It she wished, I would say,
she could use them to travel to Mars and bring the spaceman back to Earth.”(EW, 97) With
the hope that, “Perhaps I might even click the heels together three times, and win back her
heart by murmuring, in soft reminder of our wasted love, There is no place like home”(EW,
98) At last he loses the auction and also the hold of his cousin. “So it is that my cousin Gale
loses her hold over me in the crucible of the auction. So it is that I drop out of the bidding go
home and fall asleep. When I awake I feel refreshed, and free.” (E.W.p.102) Rushdie
mimefies, his own predicament with the homeland and religion in restoring his relationship
with his cousin Gale. Similarly he loses hope of getting back Gale, so also the hope of
getting back his entry into the homeland. Since the announcement of Fatwa on St.
Valentine’s day 1989 he has been targeted by religious zealots and professional killers hired
by ecclesiastical heads of the state and remained in virtual exile from his national and literary
communities appearing sometimes only on the world stage to plead his unique and desperate
case.

The third story in this collection of the West is “Christopher Columbus and Queen
Isabella Consummate their Relationships.” Here Columbus and Queen Isabella’s surrealistic
relationship evokes a sadomasochistic flirtation. “At luncheon she promises him everything he wants; then cuts him dead later the same afternoon, looking through him as if he were a veil.... On his saint’s day she summons him to the inmost boudoir, dismisses her girls, permits him to braid her hair and for a moment, to fondle her breasts. Then she summons her guards. She banishes him to the stables and piggeries for forty days. He sits forlorn on hour’s munched hay while his thoughts run on distant, fabled gold. He dreams of the queen’s perfumes but awakes, gagging, nag pigsty.”(EW, 109)

Toy ing with Columbus pleases the Queen. Columbus’s aim is different. He wants to please the Queen to get three ships, Nina Pinta, Santa Maria, money and gold to carry out his voyage. But by pleasing the Queen he degrades his position to the level of a fool. She turns him into one of the four hundred and nineteen fools in her court. She is a monarch tyrant and impossible to bend. “He, Columbus is merely her four hundred and twentieth idiot. This, too, is plausible scenario.”(EW, 111) Perhaps she wants to understand the dream of a world beyond the world’s end or perhaps she is pretending not to understand Columbus’s need. Columbus thinks that, “The search for money and patronage is not so different from the quest for love.”(EW, 112) But his patience exhausts and he gives up his hope, while Isabella dwindles in the court of the Lions. “He now thinks that ‘The loss of money and patronage is as bitter as unrequited love.’”(EW, 115) In the dream he sees Isabella, “Staring into a large stone bowl held aloft by stone lions. The bowl is filled with blood, and in it she sees—that is, Columbus dreams her seeing a vision of her own”. (EW, 116)
She remembers Columbus and wants to re-establish her relationship with him as she understands that, he is the only man with whom she can conquer the unseen world beyond the known world. She sends her heralds to bring him back. At first Columbus does not want to accept, he wants to say 'no' but the words that come out are only 'Yes I'll come.' Isabella realizes that he was the only man who can fulfill her ambition for conquest of the unknown world and Columbus too realizes that only with the help of Isabella he too can fulfill his life’s ambition of seeing the unknown world.

The final section of *East, West* consists of three stories “The Harmony of Spheres”, “Chekov and Zulu”, and “The Courter”, in which Rushdie presents a realistic account of characters and their relationships with their counterparts. In “The Harmony of Spheres” Rushdie presents the relationship between Eliot and Lucy, and Khan and Mala. The East-West crossing takes place in two forms of inter-racial liaisons. Lucy tries hard to look after her husband suffering from ‘brainstorms’ i.e., paranoid schizophrenia. She even quits her job. But unfortunately she fails to keep up her relationship with Eliot and is attracted to Khan, which leads to infidelity. Khan tells his friendship with Eliot: “Who knows what makes people friends? Something in the way they move. The way they sing off-key.”(E.W.p.136) He further analyses,

But in the case of Eliot and me, I do know, really. It was that old black magic. Not love, not chocolate: the Hidden Arts. If I find it impossible to let go of Eliot’s memory, it is perhaps because I know that the seductive arcane which drove Eliot Crane out of his mind almost ensnared me as well. (D, 147)
They both used to practice hypnosis. In one of such sessions Eliot hypnotizes Khan to strip off his clothes. Khan struggles hard to drive away but yields and starts unzipping his jeans, but is thrown out by Mala and Lucy. Mala accuses Khan and warns him to keep away from Eliot. Khan finds in, “Eliot’s enormous, generously shared mental storehouse of the varieties of ‘forbidden knowledge’ fusion of world-views, European Amerindian Oriental Levantine, in which I desperately wanted to believe.”(EW, 141) When Eliot is dead Khan reads dozens of the papers left by him. “Harder still to read were his fantasies about us, his friends. These were of two kinds: hate-filled, and pornographic. There were many virulent attacks on me, and pages of steamy sex involving my wife Mala” (EW, 144) Khan comes to know about what has made Eliot sick. Lucy after Eliot’s death remarries. The most surprising thing is the confession of Mala’s infidelity to the unsuspecting Khan. Both the pairs fail to establish their marital relationships.

In the second story, “Chekov and Zulu Rushdie depicts how forces of history impinge on the personal lives of both the friends’ companionship. Right from their boyhood days they like science and scientific fiction. Their fondness for “Star Trek” gives them nicknames Chekov and Zulu. They are blood brothers though of different type. Chekhov has bookish knowledge and Zulu has athletic powers. They continue their friendship even as England’s ‘diplomats’. They continue their childhood interests in Star Trek by exploring new worlds and new civilizations in England. Chekov is employed as Acting Deputy High Commissioner and Zulu is employed as an intelligence officer. The assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard plays an important role in the friendship of Chekhov and Zulu. Chekhov is
found recollecting the incident of the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and as to how he and Zulu got those names.

After a while we got a couple of cheap paperback novelisations and passed them round as if they were naughty books like Lady C or some such. Lots of us tried the names on for us but only two of them stuck probably because they seemed to go together, and the two of us got on pretty well, even though he was younger. A lovely boy. So just like Laurel and Hardy we were Chekov and Zulu. (EW, 165)

When they both return to India, Chekov joins the Government service and Zulu sets up a private detective agency, and flourishes well. But unfortunately Chekov dies in a bomb blast along with Rajiv Gandhi. Chekov and Zulu can again be best friends after death. Chekov at death has a momentary vision, not of what might have been but of their earlier togetherness. At the end Rushdie concludes, “Chekhov took Zulu’s hand and held it firmly, victoriously, as the speeding balls of deadly light approached.” (EW, 171)

In the last story “The Courter” Rushdie presents the relationship between an aged woman Mary with a porter, Mecir, who was a chess master in his past life. The porter is a widower and is known to the children as Mixed-up. He teaches Mary the game of chess. Intact they use the name of the game as the language of love. Their relationship is symbolic of the relationship between East and West:

He taught her with great patience, showing-not-telling repeating openings and combinations and endgame techniques over and over until she began to see the meaning in the patterns. When they played, he handicapped himself; he told
her best moves and demonstrated their consequences, drawing her, step by step, into the infinite possibility of the game. (EW, 71)

Such was their courtship. But unfortunately Certainly Mary does not want to be in London because the Maharaja’s affair leads to a tragedy which involves Courter and he gets hurt by the attack of Beatles. It is Mary who looks after Mecir. “Certainly Mary spent as much time as she could with Mecir; but it was the look of my old aya that worried me more than poor Mixed up. She looked older, and powdery, as if she might crumble away at any moment into dust.”(EW, 206)

She has got a heart problem and she has never recovered in London. The doctors also fail to detect the reason for her palpitations. Finally she requests the narrator’s father to send her back to India. After her return, Mary never complains of heart attack. So her relationship with her homeland is stronger than her relationship with Courter and with the family of the narrator. The story is rather autobiographical as the narrator too confesses that he himself was torn between his native and adopted lands. Rushdie too, like the narrator and Mary longs to go to his native land, but his relationship with the West is as good as his relationship with the East. So he says at the end: “I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. 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)

To conclude, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie have been successful in dealing with human relationships in their stories. Raja Rao’s protagonists are
successful in establishing good relationships with different people in the society as they are all soft, amicable and tender natured. Even in the stories of Anita Desai we find the same kind of folks. The protagonists of her stories are all Indian and try their best to establish good human relationships with their counterparts. In the stories of Bharati Mukherjee, most of the protagonists fail to establish good relationships with their counterparts. As all the stories are set in America and London most of the protagonists are women from Asian countries who want to prove themselves in alien nation and get assimilated there. In the process they fail to establish their relationships with their American counterparts who are always ready to establish good relationships. Salman Rushdie’s, protagonists are Indian, Pakistani, and English. He wants to bring the East and West together by enabling his protagonists succeed in establishing good relationships wherever they to.
References:

12. Ibid.p.52.

