Carnivalesque spirit is common in Magical Realist fiction. The term “carnival” came to have particular prominence in literary criticism after the publication of Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*. Carnival features as a utopian irruption into the routine world. For David M. Boje, carnivalesque is the “use of theatrics to face off with power via satire and parody, and invite spectators to a new reading of the spectacle of global capitalism”(1). The carnivalesque can be grotesque, violent or quite peaceful. In the midst of media dominated by spectacle, advertising, infotainment, and purchased by transnational power, carnivalesque gains added significance.

Carnivalesque involves festivity and merrymaking. It is mixed with fun and humour, even sexual exhibition meant to jolt power into awareness of its psychic organization. There is an explosion of freedom involving laughter, mockery, dancing, masquerade and revelry. It involves occupation of the streets in which the symbols and ideals of authority are subverted and satirized with irony. One cannot watch carnival as a by-stander, but has to take part as a ‘spect-actor’.

Carnival is a safety valve, a way for the oppressed masses to blow off some steam, and not erupt into revolution. The extravagant juxtapositions, the grotesque mixing and confrontations of high and low, upper-class and lower-class, spiritual and material, young and old, male and female, daily identity and festive mask, serious conventions and their parodies, gloomy medieval time and joyous
utopian visions—indeed the whole idea of bringing life "down to earth" is the concept that is central to the carnival.

Carnival in the present thesis means any kind of gathering, celebration, protest and the like where a number of people commingle. Carnival, in the modern context, revolves much around politics (protests, processions and campaigning). Theatre is another centre of carnival where again people crowd and mix as they become social centres for dating and meeting.

In Magical Realist fiction, language is used extravagantly extending its resources beyond what is actually required. There is more spending than hoarding of resources. At the level both of the plot and the language of narration, there is extravagance, an antithesis to the more utilitarian mode of western capitalist enterprise. Here, 'brevity is not the soul of wit.'

Faris observes: “*Midnight’s Children* is perhaps the most carnivalesque of all, in its conscious adoption of the style of a Bombay Talkie—a cast of thousands, songs, dances, exaggeratedly sumptuous scenarios, horrifying blood and gore” (185). This kind of baroque mode of over extension is common in Rushdie’s fiction.

There is always numerical excess. As there are one thousand and one Arabian nights, there are one thousand and one midnight’s children. There are many characters and events described. The Magical Realist writer is in love with words. His mind is like a horse with no reigns. He is for the uncontrolled celebration of life.
Bakhtin insists that within the scatological writing of Rabelais exist the necessary evidence to discover the history of folk humour, as well as the shocking practice of the Renaissance carnival. The Renaissance carnival culture involves the temporary suspension of all hierarchical distributions and barriers among men and the prohibition of usual life. Bakhtin divides the carnivalesque into three forms: visual spectacles, comic verbal compositions, and various geneses of billingsgate or abusive language. The themes of carnival twist, mutate and invert standard themes of societal makeup. The traditions of carnivalesque mock those in authority and parody official ideas of society, history and fate.

However private a person maybe or prefer to be, the society comes bursting in, in a large way. It seeks outlet and relief in whatever form available. Carnivalesque offers a chance for people to release their pent up emotion and to settle scores with oppressive forces. Whenever there is a chance, people throw in themselves and become a part of the spectacle.

In *Midnight’s Children*, Lifafa Das, the peep show man, goes around with the magical rattle of his “dug dugee drum and his voice, ‘Dunya Dekho’, see the whole world!” (75). He carries pictures of the places and events of importance inside his little machine. There are pictures of the Taj Mahal, The Meenakshi Temple, The Holy Ganges, Stafford Crips leaving Nehru’s residence, a publicity still of a European actress and so on. This pulls a large crowd and there is a mood of festivity. Das is in the tradition of the ‘friars’ of Middle Ages
who took information to people’s doorsteps. Such street shows are popular as part of folk culture in the tradition of the ancient pageantry. Carnivals are meant for sharing and interchanging of information too.

Wee Willi Winky is in the tradition of the Shakespearean fool. He comes into the Methwold estate to entertain the residents: “The tradition of the fool, you know. Licensed to provoke and tease. Important social safety valve” (MC 102). He announces the arrival of two births. He also announces of the prize that the government has announced for the children to be born at midnight. Thus he is both a prophet and an announcer of government schemes, a bit of a ‘town-cryer’.

The arrival of Independence is celebrated with much gala and fanfare; it is an “extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom. [...] India, the new myth--a collective fiction” (MC 112). The fanfare and paraphernalia that accompany Independence lead to the rise of nationalism. It is celebrated in Methwold estate also. “The monster in the streets has already begun to celebrate; the new myth courses through its veins, replacing its blood with corpuscles of saffron and green” (MC 115).

The linguistic riots that follow the division of Maharastra and Gujarat are the reflections of the modern carnival spirit. There is a clash between the Samyukta Maharastra Samiti (S.M.S.) and the Maha Gujarat Parishad (M.G.P.) learning “fifteen killed, over three
hundred wounded” (MC 192). To add spirit to the carnage there is a little rhyme, “Soo che? Saru che! Danda le ke maru che!” that translates in to English as “How are you?-- I am well--I’ll take a stick and thrash you to hell!” (MC 191).

The Indian contingent’s arrival in Dhaka to celebrate the victory of the Indian army is a typical example of carnival.

The conjurers and other artists marched beside the troops, entertaining the crowds; there were acrobats [...] there were extraordinary female contortionists who could swallow their legs up to their knees; there were jugglers [...] there were card trickers [...] there was a great dancer Anarkali [...] there was Master Vikram the sitarist [...].

And there was Picture Singh himself, a seven foot giant who weighed two hundred and forty pounds and was known as the Most Charming Man In The World. (MC 378)

It is really nice that “the pain of the city was washed and soothed in the great glad outpouring of their magic” (MC 379). This is what is expected of the carnivalesque--to help people keep their wits intact.

Slum life itself presents a carnival spirit wherein everyone is involved in some game or other. Magical Realism enjoys special affinity with the poor and the downtrodden, the primitive and the illiterate. Saleem after his return from Bangladesh, settles in a Delhi slum and becomes a part of its throbbing life.
The Republic Day is celebrated with equal fervour. “January 26th, Republic day is a good time for the illusionists. When the huge crowds gathered to watch elephants and fireworks, the city’s tricksters go out to earn their living” (MC 414). In oriental countries, it is appropriate that people have time ‘to stand and stare’, since they are yet to become time conscious.

In Shame, when Omar Khayyam emerges from the solitude of the forbidden mansion, Farida, Zeenat and Bilal await his arrival to settle scores for Yahoob Balloch’s mysterious death. Yahoob engineers the dumb waiter with stilltoes embedded that could be released on the target at the press of a button. This marvel causes his life as it has to be kept a secret. They wait with a garland of shoes. Along with them wait a crowd comprising of “divers other gawpers and taunters, raggedy urchins and unemployed clerks and washerwomen on their way to the ghats” (S 41). They all hurl abuse at Omar and jostle him. When Dawood hurls the garland of shoes at Omar, Maulana Dawood straightens up to howl at God and the fateful necklace falls on and hangs around “the divine’s accidental neck” (S 43). People, in oriental countries, enjoy the luxury of time and any happening in the street entertains them and they also enthusiastically participate in the event.

Bilquis’s father Mahmoud Kemal, known as Mahmoud the Woman, owns “the Empire Talkies, a fleapit of a picture theatre in the old quarter of the town” (S 60). This is not a quiet theatre like the ones in the cities but one where “the paying customers make the very devil
of a din, except during the hits song numbers” (S 60). Here is life at its full throb. He brought doom on this Empire by booking “a double bill into his Talkies: Randolph Scott and Gai-Wallah would succeed one another on his screen” (S 62). As a result of this, both sides ‘veg’ and ‘non-veg’ boycotted the empire and brought it down with a bomb blast. Theatre is a modern center of carnival, the center of social activities that echo the spirit of the time and, in India, people consider movies real with their ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ at full play.

Barriamma’s tales expose life’s variety and vitality. They sparkle with the enthusiasm and involvement of the listeners. They offer a peep into the myriad ways of celebration, indulgence and experience:

These were lurid affairs, featuring divorces, bankruptcies, droughts, cheating friends, child mortality, diseases of the breast, men cut down in their prime, failed hopes, lost beauty, women who grew obscenely fat, smuggling deals, opium-taking poets, pining virgins, curses, typhoid, bandits, homosexuality, sterility, frigidity, rape, the high prices of food, gamblers, drunks, murders, suicides and God. (S 76)

Life, for a Magical Realist, is never insipid; it always palpitates with some activity or other. Characters and personae also are not stereotyped as variety is the very thing.

Verbal excess is a part of carnivalesque. It often verges on obscenity that comes straight from the uncensored mind. Mir Harappa
railing at his cousin Iskandar Harappa’s wife, Rani Harappa, is a fine example:

‘What do you know about that bullock’s arsehole, madam? Fuck me in the mouth, but I know. That pizzle of a homosexual pig. Ask the villagers how his great father locked up his wife and spent every night in the brothel, how a whore disappeared when her fat stomach couldn’t be explained by what she ate, and then the next thing Lady Harappa was holding the baby even though everyone knew she hadn’t been screwed in a decade. Like father, like son, my honest opinion, sorry if you don’t like it. Sisterfucking bastard spawn of corpse-eating vultures. Does he think he can insult me in public and get away with it? Who is the elder, me or that sucker of shit from the rectums of diseased donkeys? Who is the bigger landowner, me or him with his six inches of land on which even the lice cannot grow fat? You tell him who is king in these parts. Tell him who can do what he likes round here, and that he should come crawling to kiss my feet like a murdering rapist of his own grandmother and beg for pardon. That nibbler of a crow’s left nipple. This day shows him who’s the boss’. (S 96)

Magical Realism is not for the morally prudish.

Weddings, that too oriental, are instances of fun, gathering and celebration. All social customs and formalities are observed; it is
indeed a public celebration--lots of things to eat/devour, the dance and music, the extravaganza that involves huge expenses, the colourful costumes, the mild teasing of the bride, all add to the carnivalesque atmosphere. The mature women, to orient the would be wife, tell her what intercourse would be like: “Think of a sikh kabab that leaks hot cooking fat”, “It’s like sitting on a rocket that sends you to the moon”. They tease the bridegroom with a little ditty; “Face like a potato! Skin like a tomato! Walks like an elephant! Tiny plantain in his pant” (S 146).

Carnival is often reflected as protest in the modern times. When Yahya Khan’s regime comes to an end and Bhutto takes over, there is a public upraising.

Something else was happening that night. On university campuses, in the bazaars of the cities, under cover of darkness, the people were assembling. By the time the sun rose it was clear that the government was going to fall. That morning the people took to the streets and set fire to motor cars, school buses, Army trucks and the libraries of the British Council and United States Information Service to express their displeasure. (S 167)

Sports are a variety of modern carnival. It is a great equalizer of classes and masses. It boosts the sagging national morale.

“Understanding the intimate relationship between sport and war, the new Commander-in-Chief took it upon himself to attend every possible athletic contest involving his boys, hoping to inspire the teams by his
presence” (S 201). Raza Hyder organizes sports activities like cricket, hockey and swimming to boost the morale of the army that feels depressed because of its failure in the erstwhile East Pakistan. The din created by the thousands of people assembled in a stadium—shouting and hooting—is beyond imagination.

The din created by the twenty seven children of Navid and Talvar Ulhaq is another example of carnivalesque. Here is action aplenty as all the children are reared under the same roof:

Twenty-seven children aged between one and six puked, dribbled, crawled, drew with crayons on the walls, played with bricks, screamed, spilled juice, fell asleep, tumbled down stairs, broke vases, ululated, giggled, sang, danced, skipped, wet themselves, demanded attention, experimented with bad language, kicked their ayahs, refused to clean their teeth, pulled the beard of the religious teacher engaged to teach them handwriting and the Quran, tore down curtains, stained sofas, got lost, cut themselves, fought against vaccination needles and tetanus jabs, begged for and then lost interest in pets, stole radios, and burst into top-level meetings in that demented house. (S 226)

People rushing into the forbidden palace of ‘the three mothers’ is a typical instance for mob behaviour. The crowd hesitates for a moment and then enters—“cobblers, beggars, gas-miners, policemen, milkmen, bank clerks, women on donkeys, children with metal hoops
and sticks, gram vendors, acrobats, black-smiths, wives, mothers, everyone” (S 284). They loot, rip, tear, crunch and do all sorts atrocious deeds without any rhyme or reason. “Afterwards, they would look at each other with a disbelief in their eyes that was half proud and half ashamed and ask, did we really do that? But we are ordinary people…” (S 284-85). Ordinary people are always on the lookout for some outlet, to unleash anger. This breaking in is a kind of protest of the meek and the poor into the bastion of the rich. There need not be any rational reason or cause for such rash actions.

In The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie has a keen eye to observe the pulsating life of India. He captures the celebratory nature of life. The dust and the tumult of boats in Cochin harbour, the horns of freighters and tug boat chugs, the fishermen’s dirty jokes and the throb of their jellyfish stings, the sunlight as sharp as a knife [...] the calls of floating hawkers, the wafting sadness of the unmarried Jews across the water in Mattancherri, the menace of emerald smugglers, the machinations of business rivals [...] the tales of communist troublemaking and Congresswalah politics, the names of Gandhi and Nehru [...].

(MLS 9)

Rushdie indicates that life is full of events, with people actively engaged in living.

Epifania’s life, after the death of her husband, assumes a sort of celebratory nature. She does not shrink but expands:
The simplicity of long mornings scolding the tailor who came over to the house with new dresses, and knelt at her feet with mouthfuls of pins which he removed from time to time to unloose his flatterer’s tongue; and then of long afternoons at the fabric stores, as bolts of magnificent silks were flung across a white-sheeted floor for her delight, cloth after cloth flowing thrillingly through the air to settle in soft fold-mountains of brilliant beauty; the simplicity of gossip with her few social equals, and of invitations to the ‘functions’ of the British in the Fort district, their Sunday cricket, their dancing teas, the seasonal carolling of their plain heat-beaten children.

(MLS 26)

This is her idea of simplicity but one that is far from Gandhi’s concept.

Politics is full of fun and fanfare in India. There is always something carnivalesque about it. People get carried away by mass emotion. In the 1920s, Leninism spreads throughout the world and Soviet actors had been given exclusive rights to the role of V.I.Lenin.... The Lenin--theps memorized, and then delivered, the speeches of the great man, and when they appeared in full make-up and costume people shouted, cheered, bowed and quacked as if they were in the presence of the real thing. (MLS 28-29)
Camoens Da Gama brought this Leninism to Cochin and made a big ‘tamasha’ of it; he hired a few good-for-nothing fellows and made them dress up like Lenins. They were let loose into the society and they created quite a titter. The ‘real Russian to be Lenin’ Viladimir Ilyich is thoroughly upset about the Indian burlesque. “Babeling Lenins, their beards coming loose in the heat, addressed the now enormous crowd; which began, little by little at first, and then in a great swelling tide, to guffaw” (MLS 31). These look alike Lenins have made a mockery of a serious issue.

On Cabral Island, the home of Camas, “A northern fellow, a U.P. type” (MLS 34) arrives. He plays music, entertains children on his simplified giant wheel and performs little tricks. He “made fish swim out of the young girls’ mouth and drew live snakes from beneath their skirts” (MLS 34). His arrival electrifies the Cabral Island and whips it up from sleep. There is sport and magic provided to make life more colourful.

Aurora, during her period of house arrest imposed by Epifania, fills the walls around feverishly with pictures of all sorts that bring out life at its best.

Every inch of the walls and even the ceiling of the room pullulated with figures, human and animal, real and imaginary, drawn in a sweeping black line that transformed itself constantly, that filled here and there into huge blocks of colour, the red of the earth, the purple and vermilion of the sky, the forty shades of green; a line
so muscular and free, so teeming, so violent, that
Camoens with a proud father’s bursting heart found
himself saying, ‘But it is the great swarm of being itself.’

(MLS 59)

In addition to the items mentioned in the above paragraph, there are
the history of King Gondopheres and the battles of Srirangapattnam;
Taj Mahal and the Magic Fortress of Golconda; famous personalities
like Nehru, Gandhi, Jinnah, Patel, Bose and Azad; family portraits
where Carmen is ‘bottom-pinched’ and Epifania kicked in the rump by
a drunken gardener also sketched on the walls.

The New Year is celebrated with much gala on Cabral Island.
Carmen and Aires are in a very happy mood; “on the night of the party
there was an orchestra on the main lawn” (MLS 65) and the
celebration goes on for a long time. But unfortunately it ends with the
suicide of Camoens who is provoked by the unwarranted comment of
a lady called Snow White. She says to Camoens, “Still pining for your
late wife, isn’t it, and never mind that she fooled with half the town,
richman poorman beggarman thief” (MLS 66-67). Belle drinks life to
the lees living up a hectic life. She leaves no avenue of life unexplored.

In Mumbai, Ganpati festival is celebrated in an unparallel
manner. This is a kind of an Indian ‘Mardi Grass’.

Once a year, the gods came to Chowpatty Beach to bathe
in the filthy sea: fat-bellied idols by the thousand, papier-
mache effigies of the elephant headed deity Ganesha or
Ganpati Bappa, swarming towards the water astride
papier – mache rats – for Indian rats, as we know carry
gods as well as plagues. Some of these tusk’n’tail duos
were small enough to be borne on human shoulders, or
cradled in human arms; others were the size of small
mansions, and were pulled along on great-wheeled
wooden carts by hundreds of disciples. There were, in
addition, many Dancing Ganeshas. (MLS 123)

Of late Ganesha Chadurti has become an occasion for “fist-
clenched, saffron-headbanded young thugs to put on a show of
Hindu-fundamentalist triumphalism” (MLS 124).

With the ‘renewed awakening’ of Hinduism in India of late,
Hindu festivals are celebrated with ‘extra enthusiasm,’ involvement
and fun fare. This is seen as a part of ‘politicking,’ to gain extra
political mileage for Hindutva-oriented parties. Ganpati is seen as the
brand ambassador of Hindutva factions.

Aurora’s ‘chipkali’ or ‘Lizard pictures’ picturise Bombay ‘caught-
in-the-act’. They portray the active Bombay life.

the face-slapping quarrels of naked children at a
tenement standpipe, the grizzled despair of idling workers
smoking beedis on the doorsteps of locked-up
pharmacies, the silent factories, the sense that the blood
in men’s eyes was just about to burst through and flood
the streets, the toughness of women with sairs pulled over
their heads, squatting by tiny primus stoves in pavement-
dwellers’ jopadpatti shacks as they tried to conjure meals
from empty air, the panic in the eyes of lathi-charging policemen who feared that one day soon, when freedom came, they would be seen as oppression’s enforcers, the elated tension of the striking sailors at the gates to the naval yards, the guilty-kiddie pride on their faces as they munched channa at Apollo Bunder and stared out at the immobilized ships flying red flags in praise of revolution as they lay at anchor in the Harbour, the shipwrecked arrogance of the English officers from whom power was ebbing like the waves, leaving them beached, with no more than the strut and posture of their old invincibility, the rags of their imperial robes. (MLS 130-31)

All these exhibit Aurora’s commitment to bring to light the important part of life and its ‘vivre’.

Cricket also occurs in The Moor’s Last Sigh. In 1960, in the third test match against Australia, the Indian player Abbas Ali Baig scored a half century—his second of the match—that enabled the home side to force a draw. This was appreciated by a pretty young woman who kissed the batsman on the cheek. This is immortalized by Aurora in her painting “The Kissing of Abbas Ali Baig”:

In Aurora’s picture, the Brabourne stadium in its excitement had closed in around the two smoochers, the ogling stands had curved up and over them, almost blotting out the sky, and in the audience were pop-eyed movie stars—a few of whom really had been present—and
slavering politicians and coolly observant scientists and industrialists slapping their thighs and making dirty jokes. (MLS 229)

The tendency to develop an incident into a scandal is again a part of carnivalesque. Every onlooker becomes a creative artist contributing something and thus ends up adding to the scope and dimension of the incident. The simple instance of a cricket fan kissing a player, Abbas Ali Baig, that too only on the cheek, stores up the imagination of the people and even Aurora, the artist, is no exception.

everyone remembered; even those who had been at the ground that day began to speak--with much disapproving shaking of heads--of the moist licentiousness, the uninhibited writhings of that interminable kiss, which, they swore, had gone on for hours, until the umpires prised the couple apart and reminded the batsman of his duty to his team. ‘Only in Bombay,’ people said, with that cocktail of arousal and disapproval that only a scandal can properly mix’n’shake. ‘What a loose town, yaar, I swear.’ (MLS 228-29)

Exhibitionism is a part of carnivalesque and Rushdie provides explicit details of the sexual act. Uma Sarasvati provokes the Moor to work on her and mouth obscenities about his mother;

she, Uma, returned time and again to the topic of my mother’s hostility, until it seemed to become a part of what excited her. --She hates me hates me tell me what to
do. -- And I was expected to reply, and, forgive me, in the grip of lust I answered as required. *Screw her* I said. *Screw her stupid the stupid bitch.* And Uma: How? Darling, my darling, how? -- *Fuck her. Fuck her upside down and sideways too.* – O, you can, my only sweet, if you want to, if you only say you want. -- *God yes. I want to.* Yes O God. (MLS 252)

As carnivalesque is amorous also; nothing is profane to it.

Strikes and demonstrations are modern forms of carnivalesque. The Bombay mill strike runs for many days which forges a great unity among the striking workers. The means they adopt to protest like processions, slogan shouting and dharnas verge on celebration. The means adopted by MA’s crack team to break the strike lead by Dr.Datta Samant and his followers can be compared to ‘street-theatre’. It is recorded thus:

the MA’s crack teams would select and pursue individual, randomly selected demonstrators, not giving up until we had cornered them and given them the beating of their lives. We had given much deep thought to the matter of our masks, finally rejecting the idea of using the faces of the Bollywood stars of the time in favour of the more historic Indian folk-tradition of bahurupi traveling players, in mimicry of whom we gave ourselves the heads of lions and tigers and bears. It proved a good decision enabling us to enter the strikers’ consciousness as
mythological avengers. We had only to appear on the scene for the workers to flee screaming into the dark gullies where we ran them to ground to face the consequences of their deeds. (MLS 306)

Cricket, the modern carnival, finds place in The Ground beneath Her Feet also. Cricket and colonialism cannot be separated. Englishmen have left two of their legacies, besides many other things, in all their colonies--English and Cricket. Darius the cricket lover goes to play cricket in a pentangular tournament.

On the Maidan, a large, noisy crowd awaited his coming.

Sir Darius had always disapproved of the behaviour of Bombay’s spectators. It was the one small blemish on these otherwise delightful days. The hooting, the shrieking, the blaring of tin horns, the banging of dhols, the rising chant as a pace merchant ran in to bowl, the barracking, the cries of snack vendors, the howling laughter, in short the incessant clamour, created. (GHF 28)

The carnival hungry modern public flocks to the stadiums to witness and enact the game vicariously.

The need for living the life both in dream and reality, to celebrate and experience various aspects of it, is brought forth thus:

In our dreams; alone in our beds (because we are all alone at night, even if we do not sleep by ourselves), we soar, we fly, we flee. And in the waking dreams our societies
permit, in our myths, our arts, our songs, we celebrate the non-belongers, the different ones, the outlaws, the freaks. What we forbid ourselves we pay good money to watch, in a playhouse or movie theatre, or to read about between the secret covers of a book. Our libraries, our palaces of entertainment tell the truth. The tramp, the assassin, the rebel, the thief, the mutant, the outcast, the delinquent, the devil, the sinner, the traveller, the gangster, the runner, the mask: if we did not recognize in them our least-fulfilled needs, we would not invent them over and over again, in every place, in every language, in every time. (GHF 78-79)

Rushdie tries to expose the pretensions and hypocrisy of the people. What is shunned by the people in the public may be the one that is the most wanted in private. People experience many things that cannot be done normally but only vicariously and in their dreams.

The din and buzzle of Bombay life is beyond compare. Life is always seen at its highest ebb. Rai, the narrator of The Ground beneath Her Feet, records it thus:

I yearned for the city streets, the knife grinders, the water carriers, the Chowpatty pickpockets, the pavement moneylenders, the peremptory soldiers, the whoring dancers, the horse-drawn carriages with their fodder-thieving drivers, the railway hordes, the chess players in the Irani restaurants, the snake buckled school children,
the beggars, the fishermen, the servants, the wild throng of Crawford Market shoppers, the oiled wrestlers, the moviemakers, the dockers, the book sewers, the urchins, the cripples, the loom operators, the bully boys, the priests, the throat slitters, the frauds. I yearned for life.

(GHF 86)

Rai, being in America, misses all Indian throng and fun. He deeply yearns for life, as he acknowledges in the above passage. Such variety is typical of the third world. There are many in India who are just ‘loose’ and hence simply hang around.

Rai’s Bombay, through his lens, grows expressionistic and stares at him. Through his lens he wants to focus on something juicy. But as life is full, everything seems important. The busy crowded life in India is diverse with variety:

There were whores, tightrope walkers, transsexuals, movie stars, cripples, billionaires, all of them exhibitionists, all of them obscure. There was the thrilling, appalling infinity of the crowd at Churchgate Station in the morning, but that same infinity made the crowd unknowable; there were the fish being sorted on the pier at the Sassoon dock, but all the activity showed me nothing: it was just activity. Lunch runners carried the city’s tiffin boxes to their destinations, but the boxes guarded their mystery. There was too much money, too much poverty, too much nakedness, too much disguise,
too much anger, too much vermilion, too much purple.

There were too many dashed hopes and narrowed minds.

There was far, far too much light. (GHF 231)

Life is seen at its fullest in the villages of India. It is always thick, busy, wanting, amoral and full of filth and squalor. People move ceaselessly with no particular destination in mind.

The road never emptied: Bikes, horse-drawn carts, burst pipes, the blare of buses and trucks. People, people.

Roadside saints in plaster. Men in a circle at dawn pissing on an ancient monument, some dead king’s tomb. Running dogs, lounging cattle, exploded rubber tyres prominent among the piles of detritus that were everywhere, like the future. Groups of youths with orange headbands and flags. Politics painted on passing walls.

Tea stalls. Monkeys, camels, performing bears on a leash. A man who pressed your trousers while you waited. Ochre smoke from factory chimneys. Accidents. Bed On Roof Rs.2/-. Prostitutes. The omnipresence of gods. Boys in cheap rayon bush shirts [...]. The roaches, the beasts of burden, the enervated parrots, fought for food, shelter, the right to see another day of life. The young men with their oiled hair strutted and preened like skinny gladiators, while the old watched their children suspiciously, waiting to be abandoned, to be shouldered
aside, tossed into some ditch. This was life in its pure form, life seeking no more than to remain alive. (GHF 259)

Everywhere around Rai, in the villages, life is found to be striving and pullulating.

American music presents a variety which has sucked in all the bests in the world. America is the modern melting pot. Its music has the drums of Africa, the Polish dances, the Italian weddings, and the drunken rhythm of Salsa saints (GHF 276). America grows as it incorporates the best of everything and is proud of providing the best ‘pop music’ the world wants.

The media celebrates the modern carnival. In the days of Ormus Cama, there was only radio and live shows. In the presence of strict censorship pirate radio and radio-talk thrived (GHF 311).

People want their desires to be fed and nurtured. When the law hinders it, they seek gratification in an unlawful manner. Carnivalesque and censorship are always seen at logger heads.

Live music shows are real modern carnivals. The electric guitar really electrifies the crowd. Ormus has the crowd in his grip. He is seen as the music icon of the times.

Legs planted wide a part, golden guitar sparkling in his hand, tall, thin, his face like a monument to his long wait and belated triumph, the golden eye patch adding to the power of the persona, lending it piratical overtones, he represented the danger and realism of the music as well as its underlying hope. (GHF 467)
The celebration of life, of music, continues. Vina is no more but Vina's Music goes on. "Her voice is doing extra-ordinary things--new and familiar--with the song's melodic line, stretching and bending the sound, bringing a jazzy feel to it" (GHF 571). The invisible crowd goes crazy over her celebratory music. It pulsates to the throb of it.

Protests--both social and political--celebration of Independence, language riots, weddings, processions, parties and get-togethers, exhibitions, cricket, theatre, musical extravaganzas, and verbal exaggerations are instances of carnivalesque that have been analysed in this chapter.