CHAPTER II

EMERGENCY AND INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION
Emergency and Indian English Fiction

Arun Joshi’s fifth and the last novel *The City and The River* is a political allegory having close affinity with the Indian Emergency of 1974-75. O.P. Mathur opines: “The Indian political scenario of the Emergency period is in many respects paralleled in the novel” (*New Perspectives in Indian Literature in English*. 1995: 146). There is infallible relevance between the political issues depicted in the novel and that of the emergency period declared by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in 1975. The character portrayal of the ‘Grand Master’ in *The City and The River* parallels with the dictator Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The term and condition of the ruling party during the emergency coincide with the despotic rule of the Grand Master in the novel. In the present piece of work Arun Joshi depicts the socio-political issues of a city. This time, he seems to deviate from his major themes such as alienation, conflicts, emotional imbalance, dissatisfied life and search for self. R.K. Dhawan states: “Joshi experiments with the medium of literature for studying man’s predicament, particularly in the light of motives responsible for his action on his psyche” (*The Novels of Arun Joshi*. 1992: 8).

The novelist persists on the importance of values in life. Humanity, compassion, faith are some of the questions on which Joshi’s last novel stands. He also uses the theme of time here. The concept of the cycle in this universe is depicted through construction and destruction.

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The Grand Master is the prototype of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who wants to establish “The Era of Ultimate Greatness” (Joshi. *The City and The River*. 1990: 23 ) in the city for this purpose he adopted unlimited power, tyranny and autocracy as if he is the king and the public are his subjects. Ultimately his desire leads to the utter destruction of the city. This incident is reminiscent of the circumstances during the promulgation of internal emergency. Arun Joshi depicts the plight of the poor boatmen in the novel who were easy target for the Grand Master and his sycophants. The same befell with the poor and helpless people, the slum dwellers during Indira Gandhi’s emergency. The story of the Grand Master is narrated by Great Yogeshwara (The Guru) to one of his disciple, the Nameless-one who is living in a new city that rises from the remains of the old one. Joshi employs the mythical framework to narrate the events of the novel.

*The City and The River* is reminiscent of the circumstances of the emergency. The Grand Master desires to become the king and rule over the boatmen. He also assures his son’s succession to the throne. This reminds us of Indira’s rule during emergency. The twenty-point programme of Sanjay Gandhi is similar to the ‘Ways of the Three Beautitudes’ or ‘Triple way’ (TCTR. 177). Apart from this bulldozing the mud houses of the boatmen which lies in the outskirts of the city is similar to the destruction of slum areas in the name of the beautification programme in Delhi.
during the emergency. The dwelling places of the Grand Master and his ministers are in the Seven Hills which remain stationary in their places. The family planning scheme is imposed to utmost heights. The implication of the orders raises same anger and aggression as it was during emergency of 1975. The Grand Master ordered the public: “Only one child to a mother and two to a home” (TCTR. 18).

The scheme is enforced to reduce the population of the boatmen. The voices which rose against the one in power were suppressed and the primitive boatmen were expected to show allegiance towards the Grand Master. Another point of similarity between the incidents of the novel and that of the emergency can be viewed from the presence of a coterie of sycophants. In the novel the coterie of the Grand Master includes the Minister of Trade the Education Advisor, the master of Rallies, the Astrologer and the Commissioner of Police. They are his council of Advisors too. The nature of punishment during the imprisonment was cruel and inexorable as it was in the emergency phase when great leaders like Jaiprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, George Fernandes were imprisoned. In the novel the boatmen are tortured, given physical and mental affliction in the gold mines which resembles the dark and damp dungeon. The Grand Masters façade of The Era of Ultimate Greatness is initiated with the arrest of a boatman and a clown who dared to laugh at the Grand Master. Bhoma, a mathematics teacher is arrested by cops for planning and plotting against the Grand
Master. “These acts of suppression and torture including the blinding of the Headman remind us not only of the emergency but also of incidents like Jallianwala Bagh, the French Revolution and the Communist rule in the erstwhile Soviet Union and in China” (Mathur, 2004: 90). Another malpractice prevalent during the Emergency was restricting the freedom of the press. This event also parallels with the one presented in the novel. The novelist shows the direct control of the Grand Master over the media. News in favor of the head of the state and his coterie is broadcasted in the radio. Anything against them is censored. Arun Joshi satirizes the situation: “The Master of Rallies also controls the satellite. The satellite controls the radio and the video. The Master of Rallies controls the Satellite on the Grand Master’s behalf because the satellite is the property of the Grand Master” (TCTR. 88).

A close examination of the events in the novel shows the evil faces of political tyranny practiced against boatmen being the most rebellious as they are in majority. The mud people and brick people who could easily be threatened and deceived. The novel is an imputation of the heinous face of emergency. Moreover it provides the cosmic point of view which shows repression of the poor by the Grand Master over the question of allegiance shown to him. But boatmen substantiate their loyalty only to the river because they consider river as their mother and it is there sincere duty to bestow in the services of their mother
and to show allegiance towards her. Being a despotic king the Grand Master is shown as a “thong of darkness growing dark” (epigraph of the novel).

The kingdom of this merciless king is destined to annihilation with the promise of a new beginning in proper order which will establish if “the king that comes is of the right kind”. (TCTR. 68). Siddharth Sharma compares the period of emergency with the reign of Grand Master, Siddhartha Sharma observes: “Tyranny and repression, hypocrisy and deceit, selfishness and corruption, violence and destruction are rampant in the “City” of the Grand Master. The events portrayed are reminiscent of the Emergency in India, as the aftermath in both the case proved ruinous to the rulers”. (Gajendra Kumar and Shankar. Indian English Fiction Readings and Reflections. 2003: 82).

The novel also focuses on existentialism which one of the most influential literary theory of the twentieth century. Originally it was applied in the works of Camus and Sartre. “A chiefly twentieth century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analyses of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad” (web).
The Gita is another powerful source used in the novel. Arun Joshi seems to have been influenced by the teachings of *Bhagavad Gita* and his novels gives an impression of this influence. In *The City and The River* the portrayal of the evil forces and its dominance over the virtues is suggestive of one of the famous shloka of the Gita:

“yada yada hi dharmasya glananibhawati bharat.
Amyutthanamdhamasya tadatman shajramhyam” (IV. 7).

The philosophy of *The Gita*, *The Upanishads* and Gandhian thoughts are the Indian forms of existentialism Arun Joshi’s existential concerns find space in his last novel *The City and the River* too. According to Subhash Chandra among the elements of existentialism the “most important element which stresses the sanctity of the subjective individuality is the authenticity of the self” (Dhawan. *The Novels of Arun Joshi*. 1992. 266). The other elements are chaos, alienation, sorrow, despair, irrelevance, vacuity. Instead of focusing on the existential issues of an individual, the novelist brings into light the existential predicament of the ‘city’ where the Grand Master reigns. Arun Joshi’s characters often suffer from the problem of absurdity, alienation loneliness and pointlessness in life. This happens because they are surrounded by materialistic pursuit’s egoism, self-centeredness, foppish life style leads to loss of spiritual values and alienation from one’s roots. Arun Joshi affirms that
“the world belongs to God and to none else and He is the noblest thing each of us can imagine” (TCTR. 70).

In *The City and The River* the Grand Master and his sycophants are such characters. They become the focus of study of existentialism for the novelist. The Grand Master is the evil incarnated who tries to govern the common people belonging to lower and middle strata of the society who try to govern the common people belonging to lower and middle strata of the society. He desires to become the king which leads to total annihilation of his kingdom. Thereafter, a new city arises of the old one. This recurrence of events is witnessed by the Guru Yogeshwara, who is also the narrator in the novel. He enlightens his disciple in the novel. The Nameless one by the teachings of *the Gita* in which Lord Krishna preaches Arjuna regarding the unending cycle of the birth and death of human beings.

“Vaasani jeernani yatha vihaya navani grahati narodparani tatha sharirani vihaya jeernanyani sanyati navani dehi” (II.22)

The same happens in the Grand Master’s ‘city’ God demolishes him along with his city, when he tries to exceed his tyranny over the helpless one. The time-wheel moves and with it the cyclic process of humanity continues thus giving rise to a new city with a new Grand Master and a new kingdom to rule over. In this way the course of events repeats itself in every generation.
The Grand Master made several attempts to devastate the life of boatmen. His barbarity crossed the limits when he orders the police commissioner to destroy the musical instruments of the boatmen. This move of the Grand Master makes him a subject of the curse induced from the pangs of affliction on the destruction of their instruments. The ancient traditional song also comes to an end. As a result of the curse the city is washed out by the flood raised due to heavy rainfall for seven days and seven nights. “Of the Grand Master and his city nothing remained” (TCTR. 260).

Arun Joshi believes in the presence of the evil forces but he also reassure that the evil does not last long. This is what he has attempted to show in this novel. It was the Grand Master’s snobbery, delusion to be a Godly figure, egotism and malpractices that leads to the destruction of the city if “the Grand Master had set his ego aside for a moment and read the boatmen’s warmish appraising in the right way, the wheels of sacrifice might have moved further” (TCTR. 263). It was the boatmen’s faith and amiability that had saved the city. Once the head boatmen tell the Astrologer “It is the boatmen’s blood down the ages that had saved the city from annihilation. There is nothing here that the Grand Master need teach us” (TCTR. 21). The whole community of the boatmen never believes that the “Grand Master is His deputy on earth” (TCTR. 19).
An attempt is made by the sycophants to regard the grand master as the father of the nation (Here ‘City’). This is reminiscent of the time of emergency when the slogan ‘India is Indira, Indira is India’ was chanted by the coterie of Indira Gandhi. The novel is a satire on political scenario that brings into light the problems of the whole community. For first time Arun Joshi shifts his perspective from an individual to the entire city. Moreover the evil practices of the dictator in power are also satirized. The role of the astrologer is also to be guide (deceive) innocent public of the city. The novelist’s portrayal of the misdeeds, exploitation, corruption, intrigues and strategies in the novel is parallel to the emergency. The same has been depicted by Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie, O.V. Vijayan and Sashi Tharoor in their novels. The world shown by Arun joshi in ‘The City and the River’ is similar to the sand castles built in the sea beach which gets demolished by the sea waves. Whenever sin and immorality exceed its limits God intervene to save the world by creating a new and refined world. His ideas are rightly put up in the framework of Indian Emergency. “The politics in the novel is an allegory not only first into the generalities of politics which as is often said, consists of the art of attaining power and the craft of retaining it, and then into the higher ethical metaphysical dimensions” (Mathur, 2004: 150).

The world has been a witness to the conflict between evil and virtue. The novelist has made an attempt to delineate the
same conflict. Here, in this novel the ‘City’ symbolizes evil, malice, misdeeds, materialism, contravention of virtues etc. whereas the ‘River’ symbolizes piousness, simplicity, selflessness, cosmic perspective etc. Inspite of a continuous clash between the two, Joshi ends the novel on an optimistic note with the teaching of Guru Yogeshwra to the Nameless one to strive for righteousness in the new city. This is also a message by the novelist to the whole humanity to fight against oppression and malignance and never submit. Subash Chandra writes,

A brooding somberness constitutes the core of novelist’s vision. The boatmen and a few others to preserve the authencity of their selves, but it is at the cost of their lives. And eventually, the City containing both the victims and the victimizers gets wiped out, obliterating the distinction between the two… The oppression goes on, but so does the fight against it. (Dhawan, *The Novels of Arun Joshi*, 1992: 272)

*The City and The River* has the dimensions of an epic due to its intricate structure which covers different elements. In this parable Arun Joshi has applied the background of the conflict between power and tolerance, portrayed through the Grand Master and boatman community. The prime narrative is the struggle between virtue and evil being the two side of a coin; materialistic pursuits and humanistic values; eccentric nature of human beings and morality. In an approach the novelist has raised the concept of creation and destruction of civilization in the ‘City’. It symbolizes the transitory nature of things. Every
creation is bound to be destroyed whether it is this universe; the Grandmaster’s ‘City’ came to the verge of annihilation due to his own greed and hunger for power. Som Bhaskar, a character in Arun Joshi’s novel ‘The Last Labyrinth’ destined to the same end as of the Grand Master’s.

The other novel that is a part of this chapter is Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. A deep glance at the creative geniuses of the novelists reveals their varied cultures, communities, religion, opinions etc. Belonging to such diversity, they present a perfect portrayal of the society and human beings facing different problems. The socio-political crises, religious conflict, life of rulers, exploitation of poor peasants by landlords, deplorable plight of women, evils prevailing in society such as dowry, child marriage, sati, untouchability, struggle for freedom etc. were the prominent themes on which the novelists focused. The novels of Mulkraj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamla Markandya, Attia Husain, Khushvant Singh, Chaman Nahal etc. deal more or less with the above themes. Whereas novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy gave a new direction to Indian novel.

Technical, thematic and linguistic innovations are being made by them. Modifications in English language have already been made by introducing new forms of expression, imagery, figures of speech, idioms and phrases etc. This is the reason why
Indian English novelists have been admired and appreciated all over the World. Ahmed Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist, born on 19 July, 1947 in Bombay to Anis Ahmed Rushdie and Negin Bhatt. He has authored novels and short stories. He has a unique quality of blending mythology, fables, political, religious issues, magical realism and historical elements in his fiction. His works has lined up several critics rather than admirers. His famous work *Satanic verses* (1988) displeased the Muslim community to such an extent that Ayatollah Khomeini, spiritual leader of Iran issued Fatwa or death sentence to him. Rushdie follows post-modernistic trends in his novels. His novels *Shame* and *Midnight’s Children* comprise of complex language and self-conscious narration which are also the main traits of Post-modernism. Apart from this, we find an inclination towards post-colonialism in his works.

Salman Rushdie’s magnum opus *Midnight Children* closely presents an insight into historical and political development of pre and post independent India in the light of post-colonial literary theory. The novel is set in the backdrop of political upheaval and constant chaos during the era of independence. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of the novel was born at midnight of India’s independence and it was believed that those born on the day of independence will share the fate of both the countries India and Pakistan. The development of the country
is shown through the happenings in the life of Saleem Sinai. Independent India was like a new born-babe and Rushdie has collated the evolution of the country with the bringing up of a baby. Rushdie deals with many historical and political issues in *Midnight's Children*.

The Jallianwala massacre and pain of partition has been narrated through the character of Aadam Aziz. Amritsar massacre leaves a deep impression in his heart he felt as if he was “nowhere on earth” (Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight’s Children* 2006: 42). Other than this the issue of partition which Rushdie considers utterly undesirable event, has also been depicted through the mouth piece of Aadam Aziz. The opinions, ideas and criticism of Aadam regarding these political issues in the novel are in reality the thoughts of the novelist. It seems that Rushdie also dissent with the idea of partition and thus the formation of two countries- India and Pakistan. Saleem Sinai, also feels that the idea of partition has created the problem of identity among citizens. He himself is a victim to such a situation. Historical facts related to independence have been depicted in the novel. Rushdie has provided the older historical forms a new way of interpretation which can be studied under the concept of ‘narcissistic narrative’ given by Linda Hutcheon in her book *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. She writes: “The origins of the self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might were lie in that parodic intent basic to the
genre as it began in Don Quijote, an intent to unmask dead conventions by challenging, by mirroring” (18).

Narcissist narrative provides a self-reflecting narratorial style, active participation of the readers and finding replacements of the prior conventions and traditions. The very first line of this book about metafiction is- “fiction about fiction that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity” (1).

Saleem Sinai, the narrator in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, illustrates the concept of narcissistic narrative by his own self-aware narratorial style and by inviting the readers to participate in the creation of new ideas for discovering the replacements of old historical conventions. This sort of freedom provides an opportunity to the readers to use his mental faculties and imagination regarding the particular text. Readers go beyond just reading the story of the novel and engage him in the interpretation and understanding of the text. In this way the readers through their own inference can judge the utility of the text and to form their own perception regarding the historical facts of the text and to accept the alternatives to traditional notions of history.

Salman Rushdie’s novels are a perfect representation of post-colonial fiction. His novels depict the characteristics associated with post colonial literature. Magic realism is one
such feature related to post-colonialism. In *Midnight’s Children* Rushdie incorporates magical features, world of fantasy and supernatural things. The magic resides in the children, during the midnight of 15th August, 1947. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of the novel is one of these children. He possesses “the greatest talent of all- the ability to look into the hearts and minds of men” (*MC*. 277).

The number of Midnight’s Children extends us to 1001. They represent the whole population of India. It is an ambiguous group of rich and poor belonging to every strata of the nation. They are a true representation of India. The main purpose to confer magical and supernatural powers to the characters in the novel is to give a different direction to the events of the novel. In the present novel Rushdie has shown the desire of children to bring a positive change in the political system of the country and who do not want to blindly follow the tradition already established by their political leaders.

In *Midnight’s Children* Rushdie has artistically shown how magic realism functions with historical post modernism. In the novel, all the historical events are seen through the eyes of the narrator Saleem Sinai. Throughout the plot of the novel we find a complete reflection of Saleem’s experiences as an individual in various socio-political situations. All the three sections (or three books) covers different phases of Indian history, initiating from the Jallianwala bagh incident of April, 1919 till the Emergency
phase. The birth of Saleem on 15th August, 1947, Indo-Pakistan war in sept, 1965 makes their place within these incidents.

Book one of Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* envelopes the miraculous birth of Saleem Sinai at the midnight of 15th August, 1947, the moment India got independence from the shackles of Britishers. For this, Saleem was interlinked with the social, political and cultural fate of the country. It is quite significant that he was entwined with the history of the country. Whole Indian nation is represented in the individual self of Saleem.

The story begins in Kashmir thirty two years before Saleem’s birth in 1915. Dr. Aadam Aziz, grandfather of Saleem falls in love with Naseem While treating her during her sickness. Though he was able to see her face very late as she was always covered by a sheet. In 1918 when the First World War ends he was able to see her face for the first time. Aadam Aziz and Naseem got married and shifted to Agra. Naseem gave birth to three baby girls- Alia, Mumtaz, and Emerald and two baby boys- Mustapha and Hanif. Here Rushdie has shown the birth of a nation, end of First World War and Aadam’s loss of faith in his religion. These historical happenings commingle in the plot of the novel. Those events are followed by the marriage of Mumtaz firstly with Nadir Khan then with Major Zulfikar and lastly with Ahmed Sinai, a young merchant. Mumtaz moves to Delhi with Ahmed and she changes her name to Amina. After a terrorist organization ruins their factory they move to Bombay. There
they buy a house from an Englishman, William Methwold. By this time Amina was pregnant. Throughout the novel Saleem compiles the incidents of his life to suggest how an individual’s life and national episodes creates influence on one another. Rushdie uses the stream of consciousness technique for Saleem’s narration. Padma plays the role of faithful listener and critic.

The time of Saleem’s birth approaches, exactly at midnight. Vanita, wife of Willie Wink, who works for Methwold’s family also delivers a male child name Shiva. Mary Pereira the midwife in the nursing home switches their nametags thus inter changing their lives. This secret is revealed later. Although both Saleem and Shiva were born at the moment of Indian independence but Saleem gains more significance than Shiva. Newspapers were tuning with the news of *Midnight’s Children*. Saleem is a large child with an enormous nose which resembles that of his grandfather Aadam Aziz.

In book two Saleem narrates the period after his birth and his rearing up. By the time he reaches the age of nine he realized that he can hear some voices rattling in his head. He doubts the voices to be of Angels. He discloses it in front of his family but none believe him. While his father hits him for speaking lie. Later on Saleem comprehends those voices to be his special power of telepathy. These were a different thought-form by means of which he can communicate with other midnight’s Children. Rushdie has again linked this discovery of Saleem to a
historical context by telling that India was forming its five year plan. Out of 1001 midnight’s Children, 420 die on their tenth birthday leaving 581 alive. Saleem narrates to Padma about the magical powers; these powers vary in intensity according to the closeness of their birth to midnight. Shiva, the boy born with Saleem on the stroke of midnight, has the power of war. Whereas Parvati-the-witch has the powers of a real witch. Saleem’s mental power grew stronger and his telepathy powers helped him to bring all the midnight’s children into a conference where all of them can speak freely. During a dance rehearsal in school Saleem loses a part of his finger. In the hospital he came to know that his blood group differs from that of his parents. Mary confesses her guilt. Rushdie presents a deep insight into the life of midnight boys, Saleem and Shiva. Both are different in attributes, Saleem represents the Brahma creation whereas Shiva symbolizes destruction, anger, violence as he has seen dire poverty and necessity since his birth. These characteristics in Shiva are related to his upbringing.

Mary Pereira and uncle Hanif receive Saleem from the hospital. They were going to Hanif and Pia’s home after the revelation of truth about Saleem’s birth and parentage. A sense of nostalgia runs through Saleem while living in her Aunt’s house. The novelist has intensely intertwine Saleem’s personal feelings with that of India, his feelings nostalgic, his disappointments are related to the ancient India and problems
faced by new India. Apart from this the midnight’s children’s conference begins to split being affected by the religious, cultural and class oriented favoritism or biases. This phase in the life of midnight’s children relates with the socio-political chaos in India.

In the chapter entitled ‘Revelations’ the appearance of the supernatural in the form of a ghost of an old servant is seen. This shows the presence of magical realism. After the death of Hanif, Saleem along with his mother and sister, the brass monkey and aunt Pia move to Pakistan to live with Emerland and general Zulfikar. They return to Bombay when Ahmed falls ill. Once again Saleem’s personal life seems to be entwined with the nation’s politics. When he returns to India he reconvenes his conference with the midnight children exactly at the time when India prepares for war with China in the year 1962. India faces several attacks by China and Saleem faces criticism of other midnight children for Shiva’s absence in the group. As the war between the two become intense, depleting India of its positivity and hopes to win, Saleem’s problem of Sinus grow worse day by day. Ultimately the news of India’s defeat in the war is followed by the operation of Saleem’s sinus. The war leads to the losing hopes and optimism among the Indian army and nation as well. Similarly Saleem too looses all possibilities to connect again with the midnight children. Saleem and other midnight children
are the heart and soul of India so these events seem to be interconnected.

After the operation Saleem loses his telepathy powers but in return gains the sense of smell which can detect human emotions. Saleem along with his family returns to Pakistan. Often the nostalgic feelings surround him. Brass monkey, now named as Jamila becomes a famous celebrity singer in Pakistan. The course of events leads up to the year 1965, during the second war between India and Pakistan. The war leads to a catastrophe in Saleem’s family resulting in the paralysis of Ahmed Sinai, death of reverend mother and aunt Pie in the first bomb blast, another one takes the lives of Saleem’s mother and father, aunt Alia and their house. Saleem is wounded by the silver spittoon that belonged to his grandfather. His memory is erased completely after this incident. Saleem apprehends the war to be a reason to annihilate his family. Saleem’s loss of memory is related to the cleanliness and achieving purity.

Book three narrates the life of Saleem after his rescue from the bomb blasts. Saleem, relieved of his memory turns into a half-animal, the man-dog because of his ability of tracking things and joins the military and becomes a part of Bangladeshi independence movement. Rushdie gives reference to magical realism here by showing the presence of ghosts, images and voices in the Sundarbans. A poisonous snake bites him in his heels and he regains his memory but is unable to restore his
name. Parvati-the witch, one of the midnight children helps him to remember his name and past identity. She also helps him to return to India by secretly hiding him in her magical basket. Saleem found the deteriorating faces of the government in the country. By that time Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi has enforced the state of emergency in 1975-1977 and the worse part of it was the sterilization campaign which compelled citizens especially the poor and helpless mass for vasectomy. Meanwhile, Parvati-the witch marries Saleem though she was pregnant by Shiva. Saleem’s birth corresponds to the birth of a new independent country, India. Similarly, Saleem’s son Aadam’s birth too is connected with one of the most important political event, the state of internal Emergency in the year 1975. There were some differences in the time and condition of birth of the two. Saleem’s birth determines the beginning of a new country raising several hopes for the future, a state of optimism. On the other hand the birth of his son ceased the freedom of the citizens. Apart from the differences the trait common between them are the inherent powers in them. Aadam also possesses the power to listen with his enormous ears.

Another contradiction between their lives can be noticed by the fact that when Saleem was born, Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister sends a letter to welcome him. Contrary to it during the tenure of Indira Gandhi all the rights of the midnight’s children were compulsively sent to the
sterilization camps so that their powers may dissipate. Shiva, whose name is associated to Lord Shiva, the God of creation, voluntarily goes for the vasectomy. All the midnight children were arrested and released at the end of the emergency. Aadam, falls ill due to tuberculosis. It took him the whole period of emergency to recover. Parvati dies, Saleem decides to marry Padama, the silent listener of his story on the Independence Day which is also his thirty first birthday. But on the wedding day his body breaks into several specks of dust. Here we find a note of despair because his body will fall apart leaving all hope and energy for a better future.

Rushdie uses the stream of consciousness technique for Saleem. Saleem contains plurality of experiences from his life which hovers between the distinctness in language, religion, culture and also in socio-political conditions of India and Pakistan. Rushdie’s own life is ambiguous and he has experience of the life of three countries-India, Pakistan and Britain. He is shown to be a fatalist who loses everything he is in close affinity with. One by one he loses his gift of telepathy, unique sense to smell, his family and wife. His life is in several ways inter-related with that of his country. It is the excellence of the novelist which connects the national and political events with that of his personal life, in a way they seem to be a replication. Thus the incidents of the past allude into the present which comes together in the form of historical facts. Besides this
revolves the story of the two midnight children, Saleem and Shiva who are intricately linked to their fate. Midnight children is a representative of the elements.

Rohinton Mistry’s novel *Such a Long Journey* that embodies some glimpses of the emergency era finds place in this chapter. Diasporic writings are now a recognized form in Indian English literature. It occupies an important position in contemporary literary scene. Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Uma Parmeshwaran, V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri are some of the great writers of Indian diaspora who have received great deal of attention and acclaim in their field. Rohinton Mistry is a renowned expatriate Indian born Canadian writer. His novels are primarily set in his native place, Bombay. He belongs to the Parsi community, who are now a subject to marginalization. Nostalgic feelings of the motherland and the problem of adaption in an entirely unknown place gives rise to several different emotions in a human being. Therefore the themes of alienation, exile, rootlessness, loneliness, displacement, cultural clash are commonly viewed in diasporic literature.

Rohinton Mistry’s first novel *Such a Long Journey* published in the year 1991 won him several awards: The Commonwealth writer’s award for the best book of the year; Canada’s Governor General’s Award for fiction; W.H. Smith Books in Canada first novel award. It was also nominated for the Booker Prize. This
novel established him as a writer of repute. For selecting the themes and subject matter of his writings, he chooses the Indian social, political and cultural milieu. He acknowledged this fact in an interview with Nermeen Shaikh of Asia Source:

When you have grown up in one place and spent the first twenty three years of your life there- that’s how old I was when I left- it is almost as though you are never going to be removed from that place. Twenty -three years in the place where you were born, where you spent all your days with great satisfaction and fulfillment- that place never leaves you. All you have to do is keep updating it a little bit at a time. And it works (Asia source).

In his celebrated novel *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry deals with the social and political upheaval in the post-independent India, basically in sixties and seventies. The centre of focus is a parsi family living in Bombay Gustad Noble, is the head of the family is also the protagonist of this novel. The novel depicts the hardships and miseries, economic loss and degradation in social status faced by a parsi middle class family during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. Mistry has successfully set his novel against the backdrop of partition of Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan war. He shows that political events have direct impact on the lives of common people in any country.

Mistry has derived the title of the novel *Such a Long Journey* from the following lines of T.S. Eliot’s poem “Journey of Magi” where Eliot says:
A cold coming we had of it.
Just the worst time of the year
for a journey, and such a long journey... (Preface of the novel).

The title of the novel has a symbolic significance. In its source Eliot describes the journey of three wise men called ‘magi’ to the birth place of Christ. Gasper, Melchiar and Balthazar were the three kings of Cologne known as Magi who went to Bethlehem to present gifts and offer prayer to the son of God, Jesus. The journey was so painful for them that all the three of them often remembered their respective palaces. They met their deaths in the birth place of Christ.

Similarly in the novel Gustad Noble’s journey has a close affinity with that of Magi. He strives for survival, commitments, family ties and responsibilities, social dignity, fulfillment of dreams and aspirations of his family and above all struggle with his fortune. He is a religious person like Magi, having faith in God. He offers his kusti prayers, recites the sarosh baaj and performs several rituals for the wellbeing of his family. He faces several obstacles in the path of his dreams.

Gustad is a simple person; he works as a clerk in a bank. He lives with his wife, Dilnavaz and two sons- Sohrab and Darius and a daughter Roshan in Khodadad building in Bombay. Being a simple middle class man he aspires to provide good education
to his children for which he struggles a lot. When Sohrab appears in the engineering examination, he starts finding sources of scholarship to continue his education. “Parsi Panchayat Education Fund. R.D. Sethna Trust, Tata Scholarship…All of them I went to, touched my forehead, joined my hands and said sir and madam and please and thank you…” (SLJ. 81).

All the hopes and aspirations of Gustad and Dilnavaz lie with their son Sohrab and his success in the IIT- examination. “Iam telling you, our son will do wonderfully at IIT, he will be the best engineer ever to graduate from there” (SLJ. 27) proudly states Gustad. Mistry conveys a vivid description of the Indian family, specially the middle class. His portrayal of a father’s ambition and consideration for his son is quite significant and common in every Indian family. Gustad has been deprived of the meaning of his life as “Sohrab had snatched away that purpose, like a crutch from a cripple” (SLJ. 55).

Gustad’s anger and aggression is the reason of aggression and disappointment for Sohrab disagrees to take admission in IIT. Gustad’s comment is quiet relevant, “what kind of life was Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the black people in America—twice as good as the white man to get half as much” (SLJ. 55).
Gustad’s hopes shatters away and courage dwindles after Sohrab’s rejection and his misbehavior on the occasion of Roshan’s birthday party. Later on, in the course of events in the story we find a strange rather surprising turn in their lives.

The plot of the novel is based on the fulfillment and destruction; expectations and aspirations of Gustad. The sub-plot of the novel shows the hard blows that his family members, friends, relatives or sometimes destiny hits on him. The sudden disappearance of his dear friend, Major Jimmy Billimoria is one of the hard blows on Gustad’s peaceful life. He had been “more than just a neighbor. At the very least, he had been like a loving brother. Almost one of the family, a second father to the children. Gustad had even considered appointing him as their guardian in his will…” (SLJ, 14). Though he is physically absent but his presence is felt throughout the novel. Jimmy’s disappearance was not only mysterious but also shocking for the Nobels. The sudden arrival of his letter, once again raised Gustad’s curiosity about him and his whereabouts. Surprisingly this letter reveals nothing about Jimmy. It only contains a note of request to an old and dear friend, Gustad in order to receive a parcel which too was a secret for him. Things go on perplexing Gustad. But he decides to follow the instructions written in the letter, unaware of the consequences that he will face in future.

Mistry has also shown the fear of the marginalized Parsi community regarding their social and economic status. In a
conversation with Gustad, his friend Dinshawji expresses his fear after the nationalization of banks. He says, Parsis were the “kings of banking in those days. Such respect we used to get. Now the whole atmosphere only has been spoiled. Ever since that Indira nationalized the banks” (SLJ. 38). The feeling of rootlessness, alienation and helplessness can be sensed from this statement of Dinshawji.

Mistry’s portrayal involves tactics of government, part played by Indira while she remains the head of the Congress party. Role of Shiv Sena and among all of them are stories of ordinary human beings belonging to heterogenous communities, who are striving to seek an identity for them in a city where the Shiv Sena, “wanting to make the rest of us into second-class citizens” (SLJ. 39).

Anxiety of common public about the fate of the country is expressed through the conversation of Jimmy and Gustad “with such crooked leaders…those ministers and politicians, those ugly buffaloes and pigs…getting fatter and fatter, sucking our blood…” (SLJ. 279).

Mistry’s novel seems to be critique of people in power and politics. The case of Major Jimmy Billimoria in which he got deceived and trapped by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Gustad’s family suffers indirectly due to Gustad and Jimmy’s friendship. It is only due to an intimacy for which Gustad agrees to receive the parcel at the instructions of Jimmy given in his letter. Gustad
agrees to do the task for Jimmy in the name of friendship and trust that Jimmy shows on him. Through Jimmy’s letter he comes to know that he is working for the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Indian government. Though he keeps certain things confidential in the letter. Apart from it, Gustad decides to receive the parcel as per his friend’s instructions from the chor bazaar, where he met Gulam Mohammad who is also a companion of Bill boy (Jimmy). This parcel comes to be a big shock for Gustad and Dilnavaz. Bundles of hundred rupee note in total ten lakh rupees were inside it. This bundle comes as an infliction upon them, above it is Tehmul Lungraa, the insane boy in the building who was staring at “the little hill of money” (SLJ. 117) with his mouth open. Later on he revealed the secret to inspector Bamji and Mrs. Pastekia.

Gustad comes to know that it is government’s money and is to be deposited in the name of Mira Obili and “there are many people in our government who would like to see my guerrilla operations fail” (SLJ. 120). Pleased by the heroics of Jimmy, Gustad feels proud of him, the other moment he cursed him for putting such trouble on him just for the sake of national security. “I don’t understand this world any more. First your son destroys our hopes. Now this rascal. Like a brother I looked upon him. What a world of wickedness it has become” (SLJ. 142). He starts depositing the money with the help of his friend and colleague, Dinshawji, a jovial natured fellow, who is always there to help
his friends. He agrees to participate in the mission with Major. “One hundred percent we will help the Major. Somebody has to do something about those bastard butchers” (SLJ. 145).

The whole episode disrupts Gustad’s peace of mind, his family life and happiness and he feels betrayed at the hands of Jimmy. Ultimately, he manages to deposit the entire sum of ten lakh rupees in the bank. As soon as one problem is resolved, another appears for Gustad. His son, Sohrab has already left the house and started living with his friends. This was the reward that Gustad gets after sacrificing his entire life for him. “With holes in my shoes I went to work, so we could buy almonds to sharpen his brain…And all wasted. All gone in the gutter-water” (SLJ. 122). Besides this, it is his daughter Rohan’s frequent illness due to diarrhoea. He has to sell his belongings in order to meet the needs of his family, medicines and adequate meals for Roshan. He undergoes through a difficult phase of hardships, betrayal and disappointments altogether. The narrative of superstition is presented through Mrs. Kuttpitia. Dilnavaz keeps practicing different kinds of superstitions for the well being of her kids- green chilies, lime, taveej etc. She tries all of these to keep away the evil eye. Gustad finds no logical reasoning in it.

The sub-plot of the novel is based on the story of Major Billimoria who is used as a scapegoat by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the scandal of government money. She appears to be a corrupt and
shrewd politician, misusing power for personal interest. Mistry has very well narrated the Nagarwala case depicting the monetary fraud. This episode shows the level of corruption, pettiness and manipulation of common people by the national leaders who bear the hallmarks of patriotism. It is the corrupt politics in the higher circles that infects the stratum of society. This affects the relationship of best friends. Gustad feels:

…an incomprehensible betrayal, feeling that some vital part of him had been crushed to nothingness. Years of friendship swam before his eyes and filled the piece of paper; it taunted him, mocked him, turned into a gigantic canvas of lies and deceit. What kind of world is this, and what kind of men, who can behave in such fashion? (SLJ. 141).

As soon as Gustad with the help of Dinshawji’s help deposits the entire money in the bank, they come to know about the financial fraud and extortion committed by Jimmy and his arrest in lieu of it. The news contains a confession made by Major Billimoria about impersonating the Prime Minister’s voice, telephonically for withdrawing sixty lakh rupees. He himself goes to collect the cash in the persona of some Bangladeshi babu. He did this in order to provide aid to the guerrillas in the East Pakistan. Dilnavaz could not believe that “our Jimmy would do something so crooked” (SLJ. 197). It seems far beyond Gustad’s comprehension to link the guerrilla operation being spread from Delhi to chor bazaar in Bombay and finally to his house,
Khodadad building. “Jimmy Billimoria had trapped him, robbed him of volition” (SLJ. 141). The loyalty and closeness of their relationship remains concealed and Gustad’s trust on Jimmy gets dwindled. Gustad, being a common Indian citizen is unaware of the games played in higher politics for personal benefit. The same was done by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi whom people addressed as mother India or mother Indira.

The news of Jimmy’s arrest darkens Gustad’s life with worries, fear and uncertainty. Beyond this remains the threatening issue of withdrawing the whole amount of money deposited within one month so to return it to Jimmy. Neither Gustad nor Dilnavaz or anyone else knows the direction of the wind blowing. Everything seems to be perplexing and entangled. In their opinion, Jimmy has violated their relation and morality being a human being Gustad feels, “Jimmy, another kind of Cain. Killed trust, love, respect, everything” (SLJ. 178).

Mistry has chosen Jimmy Billimoria as the substitute of Captain Sohrab Rustom Nagarwala, a victim in the financial fraud of six million rupees from State Bank of India. This affair was famous in India during the turbulent conflict of East and West Pakistan and was known as Nagarwala case. Mistry focuses on the real event of the Nagarwala case to build the sub-plot of his novel. Captain Sohrab a parsi was arrested by police and he confessed that he had impersonated the voice of Prime Minister,
Indira Gandhi and instructed the cashier of State Bank of India to withdraw six million rupees to hand over to a Bangladeshi resident for assisting guerrilla activities in Bangladesh. After the confession, he was given an imprisonment of four years. Later on, he died in hospital.

Rohinton Mistry’s sub-plot is the heart of the novel. It critically examines the Indo-Pak war and the role of Prime Minister. When Gustad goes to meet Jimmy in New Delhi, where he was imprisoned, he came to know the realities of those in power. The sight of Jimmy after a period of one and a half year disappointed him. A well-built army person is reduced to a mere shadow, lying helpless on his bed in the hospital, fighting to survive the infection caught while working in the Sundarbans. The story of Jimmy is an eye opener to the filthy politics.

The Prime Minister was in the direct charge of RAW while Jimmy works there as a management consultant. Jimmy was surprised and offended by the ways of the Prime Minister. “…she was using RAW like her own private agency. Spying on opposition parties, ministers…Bribes, thievery…so much going on” (SLJ. 270). Jimmy was given the charge of training and supplying fighters to Mukti Bahini. He was told by the Prime Minister that the government is assisting the guerrilla movement. Funds were the main issue for Mukti Bahini. But its “hard to believe now she could be in such crookedness” (SLJ. 271). She wants the guerrilla operation keep going so she gave instructions
to Jimmy to collect the money (sixty lakh) from State Bank of India, for which she has telephonically informed the chief cashier. And she will replace the money when the aid for the mission is officially sanctioned. Unknown of the fact that he is being dragged in the marsh of intrigues if he follows the instructions.

The Prime Minister very cleverly plans to protect herself and traps Jimmy. She explains: “I have enemies everywhere. If they find out about this money, they will use the information against me. No difference to them that money is for a good cause…our country will suffer if government destabilized” (SLJ. 277). Jimmy’s patriotism makes him believe her words undoubtedly. Even he forgets his motto in life: “when in doubt, keep doubting” (SLJ. 277). She played a double game taking in confidence both the cashier and RAW agent, Jimmy. Jimmy agrees to confess that he imitated her voice, just to save her from any political mischief. “I wrote my confession…like an idiot. My respect for her…grown so much over the months. Such a strong woman. Trusted her completely” (SLJ. 277).

After an inspection Jimmy found that the finance had not been provided to the Mukti Bahini. They were still in the old ragged condition. He investigated the whole crooked plan with Gulam and found that the “money I was disturbing for supplies…intercepted. By Prime Minister’s office. Rerouted. To a private account” (SLJ. 278). It is quite possible that she utilized
the money for her son’s car factory. Corruption to such heights was baffling for Gustad. “Gustad it is beyond the common man’s imagination the things being done by those in power.” (p.280) says Jimmy.

In anger, disappointment or aggression, whatever it had been, Jimmy kept aside ten lakh rupees believing none would notice missing a small amount out of sixty lakh. He decides to utilize the money to complete his assignment for the Mukti Bahini and return to Bombay then dividing the rest amount among Gustad, Gulam Mohammad and Jimmy himself. Again he made a mistake, a big one this time and was arrested. A case was filed against him based on his written confession. Narrating the entire story of betrayal Jimmy sank on his bed, half-conscious he was. He expresses his guilt on troubling his dear friend. Gustad left the place, his watery eyes express his forgiveness. What Jimmy faced during his trial in jail was the worst side of humiliation, frustration and depression for loving his country. Unfortunately, he gets four years imprisonment; meanwhile he dies of heart attack. Now “Jimmy was conveyed safely beyond the reach of his tormentors” (SLJ. 315).

Mistry uses the backdrop of Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 in the background of the novel. Pakistani forces had bombed various places in Amritsar, Srinagar, Jodhpur, Pathankot, Chandigarh, Ambala, Agra etc. Gustad’s family has made prior arrangements for the blackout during the war. He has taped the blackout paper
since the Indo-China war in 1962. Nine years had passed but “the city no longer retired into gloom after dusk just because the lights were off” (SLJ. 305). Little Roshan also collects funds for the refugees from the East Pakistan. She won a huge doll in that competition. She is conscious of the friction going on in the country. “They are people who ran away from East Pakistan and came to India because the people from West Pakistan are killing them and burning all their homes” (SLJ. 80) says Roshan about the refugees of war.

Beyond this the picture of corruption and mismanagement in the city is presented in the novel. The scene of ‘morchas’ for mending the sewers, pipelines, pavements, street lights etc. occupy space. Different professionals participated in the morchas. Mistry describes several incidents in the novel that are interlinked with the life of characters in the novel. Some of these events possess a symbolic gesture. One such incident is the appearance of a headless rat in the vinca plant at Gustad’s house. This represents an ill omen and symbolizes the misfortunes in Gustad’s life. Similarly, the blackout paper on window panes is symbolic of Gustad’s fear of family security and protection from the external danger. His wife, Dilnavaz argue when he refuses to tear it as it is there since the Indo-China war in 1962. Dilnavaz represents: “weeks went by, then months, with paper restricting the ingress of all forms and light, early and celestial. In this house, the morning never seems to come” (SLJ. 11).
The wall in the compound of Khodadad building symbolizes the innovative idea of creation on the positive side. Gustad feels annoyed to see the wall being used as a public toilet by the passerby. He wants to keep the environment of his building healthy. So, he brought a street artist to paint the wall. The Gods of creation- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv; Moses, Ganpati, Swami Vivekanand, Zarathustra, Lady Fatima, several Mosques etc. find their place in the wall. The stinky wall has been turned into a symbol of national integrity to promote the message of tolerance and understanding among our fraternity. The destruction of the wall on government orders is symbolic of shattering human values and dreams of its creator Gustad and for the artist for whom demolishing of wall is a trivial thing as we are living “in a world where roadside latrines become temples and shrines, and temples and shrines become dust and ruin” (SLJ. 338).

In the novel, most of the characters belong to the minority community of Parsis. One such character is Dinshawji, friend and colleague to Gustad. He is jovial person, a friend who is ready to be in any kind of risk for him, without his help Gustad would not be able to deposit money in the bank. He is also a support pillar to Gustad. His death is one of the greatest blows in Gustad’s life. It is through Dinshawji that Mistry reveals the fears and anxieties of a minority community. He also shows his anguish over the loss of social and personal identity in this world where the name of streets are modified with the changing
government. He says disgustedly “All they know is to have rallies at Shivaji Park, shout slogans, make threats, and change road names” (*SLJ*. 73).

He is not in favor of changing names of the roads. He believes their emotions, sensitivities and memories of past life are closely associated to those names. It is an integral part of their life. He argues with Gustad when he says names are not important. He says: “…You are wrong. Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared; in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Soon that will also disappear. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living a wrong life, with all wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life. Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me!” (*SLJ*. 74).

The character of Tehmul Lungraa is also an important interpretation of Mistry. He is a representation of child like emotions. He is attached to Gustad and Dilnavaz. His childlessness and idiotic manners are debased with his inclination towards sexuality. He tries to impose his sexuality on Roshan’s doll, which seems to be shocking to Gustad. In another incident in the novel Gustad finds him in the House of cages giving money to prostitutes. Gustad feels sympathy towards him. He wishes to possess “the power of miracles, the power to cure Tehmul’s ills, restore to him all the rights and
virtues of mortals” (SLJ. 303). The society members take advantage of his innocence and purity of soul. On the advice of Mrs. Kuptitia, Dilnavaz tries to cast spell on Tehmul for the health of Roshan and for the return of Sohrab, this episode raises our anguish and pain for the poor desolate fellow. Mistry has depicted Tehmul’s sacrificing spirit. His death becomes a source of reconciliation between Gustad and his son Sohrab.

In less than a month’s time Gustad loses three lovable ones-Dinshawji, Jimmy and Tehmul. This is one of the greatest losses in the journey of his life. He feels hopeless and wishes to start again. “At the beginning, at least there was hope. Now there is nothing. Nothing but sorrow” (SLJ. 55). Tehmul’s death makes him realize the futility of life. After this realization he reconciles with Sohrab and starts a fresh life. Mistry introduces to the readers the culture, customs and tradition of Parsi community. The inhabitants of Khodadad are all a representative of Parsi community. The novel is teeming with the vocabulary used by the Parsi like kusti, loban, sudras, sarosh baaj, yatha ahu varyo, ruvaan etc.

J.G.Duresh remarks about Rohinton Mistry as: “Consequently, his Indian perceptions are coloured by his (Mistry) community consciousness and even by prejudices which are peculiar to the Parsi race. In short, among the Parsi writers who write about India, Mistry is the one who is hypercritical
about even the frivolous political occurrences that may seem to affect the life of Parsi in India” (Ray 2007: 96).

In the novel Mistry has given an allegorical significance to ‘journey.’ All the epigraphs introduced in the preface of the novel witnesses some kind of journey. Journey is one of the recurrent themes used in the diasporic writings. The novelist moves his plot from his native place to that of the immigrant one. The present novel Such a Long Journey portrays few significant journeys. It is a long journey of the protagonist, Gustad Nobel from anger and aggression to growth and maturity. It is a series of experience that converted a hard-hearted to a humane person, when he forgets the past and forgives his son and his beloved friend without leaving traces of regret. It is also a journey of Gustad’s life from darkness to enlightenment. The way he pulls out the black out paper, which is a representation of darkness and embraces his son Sohrab and friend, Jimmy whole heartedly. This journey is symbolic of a learning procedure for Gustad. Sometimes he laments over the worldly manners: “Lots of meanness and sadness in this world” (SLJ. 81). However at the end of the novel, he prays for the peace of his dear ones those who are alive or dead. “…and the salt-water of his eyes, as much for himself as for Tehmul…for Jimmy…for Dinshawji, for papa and mamma…all those who had had to wait for so long…” (SLJ. 337).
Mistry does not leave his weapon of sarcasm unused. He shows his concern for the deteriorating political conditions in the country, particularly during Indo-China war. He calls the country “a patient of gangrene at an advanced stage” (SLJ. 313). Further, he believes that human beings are puppets in the hands of God and destiny and there is much to struggle in this life against fate. Towards the end of the novel, he remarks: “Luck is the spit of gods and goddesses” (SLJ. 338).
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