Such a Long Journey is a brilliant first novel by Rohinton Mistry. Rohinton Mistry is one of the most remarkable writers of fiction to have emerged in recent years. The novel is set in Bombay against the backdrop of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation. The novel tells the story of a Parsi bank official, Gustad Noble, and the ways in which the conflict in the Indian Sub-Continent affects him and his family. The remarkable thing about Such a Long Journey is its absolute Indianness. It carries little traces of the Canadian immigrant experience which the author must have gone through for fifteen years before the publication of the book. It is steeped in the atmosphere of metropolitan Bombay, particularly of the exclusive Parsi community of that city, and the Khodadad Building, an apartment house, where Gustad lives along with his Parsi neighbours.

Mistry shows an Indian’s knowledge about corruption being an ingrained part of life at all levels in India. He reiterates how an ordinary citizen can get nothing done without bribes, if he has any dealings with the municipalities, the police department, or the politicians. Dr.Paymaster, the family physician of Gustad Noble, points out that “municipal corruption was only a microcosmic
manifestation of the greed, dishonesty, and moral turpitude that flourished at the country's centre. He described meticulously how, from the very top, whence all power flowed, there also dripped the pus of putrefaction, inflicting every stratum of society below”.

The fictional world Mistry creates in *Such a Long Journey* is thus no utopia of any kind. It is a picture of the fallen world in which the call of the holy word is not heard. Again, it is a world in which all forms of corruption, knavery, hypocrisy, tyranny, ugliness, and decay have become the order of the day. Mistry is highly imbued with an imaginative spirit in the development of a flawless story in *Such a Long Journey*. At the same time, his awareness of contemporary social and political situation in India, particularly the period of the 1971 Indo-Pak War, is extremely exciting. As a realist Mistry wields the weapon of satire which makes him a ruthless artist, a stern political satirist, and a devout critic of war. His attack on Nehru and Indira Gandhi is ruthless.

Mistry's novel appears to be a descriptive story of a few middle class characters in contemporary modern society. It is interesting to note that the title of the novel is taken from T.S.Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*. The title of the novel has a symbolic significance and refers to the life of Dr.Gustad Noble, the central character of the story. Gustad's journey of life is close to the journey of the Magi. Gustad was keenly desirous of the fulfilment of his dreams and aspirations. At every stage
of his life’s journey, he met with unprecedented obstacles and the workings of inexplicable forces. However, he is not the one to give in. He went ahead with the faith that the journey will surely end at a particular destination.

Such a Long Journey tells us more about the Parsi community in Bombay than a book of sociology possibly could. Mistry is able to project the emotional life and personal relationships of the Parsis as a valuable part of the wider human experience. The Indian readers of Mistry will react to this book in their own way. For readers he presents an interesting slice of their own life, which for them is a most valued thing. Salman Rushdie, another Indian expatriate writer, offends with his satiric denunciations. As M.L.Pandit observes, “Rohinton Mistry entertains while he exposes the frailties of his characters with his gentle humour and an eye for the comic in human nature”.2

Even more than the short stories, Such a Long Journey is diasporic discourse. Here Mistry overtly attempts to maintain and repossess his past. He was born in 1952 and left India in 1975 for Canada. A significant aspect of this most of diasporic writing is the word ‘journeying’ - which is also central to most diasporic writing.

There are three epigraphs which preface the novel and set its tone. The first is from Firdausi’s Iranian epic, Shah-Nama. It recalls
both the glorious Iranian heritage of the mighty empire, as well as hints at the downgraded condition of the present-day Parsis:

He assembled the aged priests and put questions to them concerning the kings who had once possessed the world. 'How did they,' he inquired, 'hold the world in the beginning, and why is it that it has been left to us in such a sorry state? And how was it that they were able to live free of care during the days of their heroic labours?'

The second one is from T.S.Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" and reminds readers of the ancient Zoroastrian religion and the belief that the magi who attended the birth of Christ were Zoroastrian priests. This epigraph also provides the title as well as the central metaphor of the novel –

A cold coming we had of it,
just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey...
Journey of the Magi

Finally, Tagore's lines from Gitanjali in a sense illustrate the way in which the Parsis have moved from one country to another and how they have had to adapt themselves to new realities.
And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.  

*Gitanjali*

The language used in *Such a Long Journey* is a fine specimen of Indian English and at once reminds the readers of the language of Mulk Raj Anand. The plot of *Such a Long Journey* is based on personal experiences and observations of the novelist. Rohinton Mistry worked in a bank for ten years. He prefers to make the central character of his first novel a bank worker and has given the story the locale of the metropolis Bombay.

Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* tells the tale of its central character Gustad Noble who is unwittingly caught up in the world of Indian politics and mired in the quicksands of high finance and war-mongering that accompanied the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971. In this novel the domestic life of Gustad Noble clashes with the forces of money. Trapped in this crossfire is Dilnavaz, Gustad’s wife and their children. It is very clear that the novel is written from the male point of view. It opens with Gustad Noble saying his early morning prayers and closes with Noble’s belated action of tearing off the black out papers from his ventilators and windows – thereby symbolically letting in light and reality. It is the male characters in the novel who ‘act,’ who ‘do’ things – Gustad Noble, his sons, Darius, Sohrab, Major
Bilimoria – a thinly disguised Nagarwala, the sinister or dangerous underworld figures of Ghulam Mohammed. Gustad’s close friend and bank cashier Dinshawji, the Christian friend Malcolm, and even the mentally retarded and lame Tehmul initiate some action.

The female characters are passive recipients of the results of these male actions. Dilnavaz, and her daughter Roshan, and their neighbour Miss Kuptitia are female stereotype characters. Dilnavaz is the perfect foil to Gustad – soft, pretty, thin, whereas as Gustad is big and muscular. As Bharucha observes, “as a couple they manifest the typical features of male aggressiveness and female passivity.” If aggressiveness is the trait of the master class, docility must be the corresponding trait of the subject group.

The child Roshan is a doll-like creature-sickly, meek, and fragile. She is a direct contrast to the sons, Sohrab and Darius. She has neither the mental bravery of Sohrab nor the physical vigorousness of Darius. As is the habit of female children, she cries, gets scared, and is petted by Daddy. Miss Kuptitia is the archetypal spinster, much calumniated by the neighbourhood. She is the omnipresent witch of fairy stories come to life. Mistry makes clear to us that Miss Kuptitia could have been a strong character, privy to ancient wisdom of women, living a life of independence. However, all we get is a representation in a ridiculous and exaggerated fashion, of a
silly, superstitious women. Miss Kutpitia's spells and magic, her being a witch are not at all in a positive feminist sense.

Such a Long Journey is a novel which proclaims Rohinton Mistry's arrival as a gifted writer. Gustad Noble, the pivotal character in the novel, is an individual depicted as a classical tragic hero who passes from "happiness to misery" and is pitted against heavy odds which he faces almost with placid serenity. This novel closely derives its form from the classical literary tradition and it describes the realistic tradition in which the narrative is pushed forward in the chronological development of plot. There lies a rich fabric of beliefs and superstitions, magic, rites, nationalistic ideas, humanism, radicalism, secular views and so on woven into the texture of the novel. Besides this, the novel has a variety of characters and their attitude towards life is very interesting.

In the opening of the novel Gustad is seen as a God-fearing man, the envy of all:

Tall and broad-shouldered, Gustad was the envy and admiration of friends and relatives whenever health or sickness was being discussed: for a man swimming the tidewater of his fifth decade of life, they said, he looked so solid. Especially for one who had suffered a serious accident just a few years ago; and even that left him with nothing graver than a slight limp. (1)
Gustad Noble is a teller in a bank and he is comparatively happy man in his early fifties. He is the father of three children, two sons, Sohrab and Darius, and a daughter Roshan. As an ordinary man he has to face many trials in his life, but he has his own dreams about the future. As the novel progresses, one finds Gustad's hopes and dreams and his aspiration belighted in a manner quite contrary to his likings. Without any moral depravity, he incurs the frown of fortune rendering him to be distraught and helpless. First there is the sudden disappearance of Major Bilimoria from Khodadad Building, who had been like "a loving brother" to Gustad and almost "a second father to children" (14). Second, his son Sohrab refuses to enrol himself as an IIT student. His bad manners and violent temper disturb the ninth birthday party of Roshan, resulting in his desertion of his home. Third, the continuous illness of Roshan disturbs Gustad. Fourth, Gustad's receipt of a package from Major Bilimoria and the troubles there after to hide the package of ten lakh rupees make him distraught. Then Gustad's close friend Dinshawji's illness and his eventual death affect him a lot. The death of Tehmul Lungraa, an idiot and a mentally retarded child, another inmate of Khodadad Building and finally the destruction of Gustad's sacred wall by municipal authorities show how fortune frowns on Gustad.

Gustad's son Sohrab gets admission to IIT. Gustad plans to celebrate it on the ninth birthday party of Roshan at which his very
close friend Dinshawji is to be present. To make the occasion more memorable, he brings live chicken into the house much to the embarrassment of his wife Dilnavaz. The initial atmosphere of gaiety, humour, songs, jokes and fun is admirably contributed by Dinshawji. Everybody in the party praises Dinshwaji as a poet laureate. Dinshawji says

'Laureate-baureate nothing, I am a son of
Mother India call me Kavi Kamaal,
the Indian Tennyson!' (47)

He hunches up his shoulders and begins to prowl like a spectre around the table, reciting in an unearthly voice that emerged from a death mark:

Gho-o-osts to right of them,
Gho-o-osts to left of them,
Gho-o-ost in front of them,
Hungry and thirsty.’ (47)

Everybody laughed, cheered and clapped except Dilnavaz, who was frantic about the food getting cold. The dinner consisted of basmati rice, stew, and chicken curry.

"Food is getting really cold," said Dilnavaz, although it was the last thing she cared about now. (48)
The party comes to an abrupt end when Sohrab turns violent uttering volleys of freakish remarks to his father and announces that he is not going to join the IIT and that he is not ready to part with his friend in the college and would pursue art programmes.

'I'm sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time I'm not interested in it. I'm not a jolly good fellow about it, and I'm not going there'.

(48)

The sudden uncalled for refusal of Sohrab not only shatters all hopes of Gustad but also makes a surprising turn of events in later course of the novel. It is from this point onwards that there appears the theme of father-son hostility. Gustad cannot hold his emotion in check:

Throwing away his fortune without reason what have I not done for him tell me? I even threw myself in front of car. Kicked him aside, saved his life and got this to suffer all my life. He slapped his hip. 'But that's what a father is for. And if he cannot show respect at least, I can kick him again, out of my house out of my life!'

(52)

Eight year ago Gustad saved his son's life at the cost of his hip that fractured rendering him limp. True, as a loving father he did a lot for his son and even bought almonds for Rs.200 a kg. to make him brainy. Gustad had a feud with Mr.Rabadi, another inmate of Kodadad.
Building. The rivalry is over the latter's charge that Darius had an affair with his daughter that went back several years.

'Mr. Rabadi was here. Complaining that Darius is after his daughter, that looks very bad in the building'.

(77)

Gustad had plans for his eldest son Sohrab and also for Darius. But one by one the aspirations crumble like a pack of cards. Traditional family ties are witnessed loosening. The reserved attitude of his wife, Dilnavaz, is explicit when she reassuringly says to him, “we must be patient.” However, Gustad has borne this far too long and it seems that his patience has been trusted to the last string:

'What have we been all these years if not patient? Is this how it will end? Sorrow nothing but sorrow.'

(52)

The family of Gustad gets more and more involved in suffering as Darius, the second son, falls in love with Mr. Rabadi’s daughter. And he is also disgusted at the horrid smell and flies and mosquitoes coming from the wall side that has been used as a public latrine:

The flies, the mosquitoes, the horrible stink, with bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall late at night it became like a wholesale public latrine.

(16)
Helpless against the stupendous network of unseen forces, Gustad derives much satisfaction in the small victory he gains over excretory ugliness when he persuades a pavement artist to turn the compound wall "pisser-proof" by painting on it pictures of saints, gods, and goddesses from all religious traditions. When the wall is finally brought down by the Municipality as part of urban improvement, the same artist suggests that "luck is the spit of gods and goddesses" (338). But Gustad can hold his head high because of the moral fibre he shows in his many acts of courage and kindness – especially in the patience with which he understands the rapid and almost incoherent utterances of the half wit Tehmul and in the compassion with which he reconciles Tehmul's adult longings with his endearing child-like innocence.

That which poignantly changes and reverses Gustad's torture is the coming of the long-awaited package from Bilimoria. The package turns out to be a huge sum to the tune of ten lakh rupees to be deposited in a bank in an account held under the name of a non-existent woman, Mira Obili. Gustad receives this package from Ghulam Mohammed. The whole thing makes both Gustad's and Dilnavaz's hair stand erect. They do not know how to hide such a huge amount. And even before the amount is deposited, the secret of the money being received is smelt by others. Gustad feels ill at ease when Tehmul tells the Inspector that the former has a mountain of money in
his flat. Another woman also makes a reference to the money, to his utter dismay. Thus the forbidden package drives away Gustad's peace and happiness and he feels annoyed and betrayed. First he hides the money in the kitchen, and then with the help of his friend Dinshawji, he deposits the whole amount in a bank, since he is unable to meet Ghulam Mohammed from whom he got the package. Taking Dinshawji into his confidence, he lets him know all about Major Bilimoria as a Research and Analysis Wing Officer (RAW).

Major Bilimoria's reappearance on the scene of action disturbs the already precarious position of Gustad. Mistry places the happenings in Gustad's life in the India of 1971 when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was at the height of her power and East Pakistan was getting ready to become Bangladesh. The events surrounding the life and death of Jimmie Bilimoria are clearly Mistry's fictional rendering of the notorious Nagarwala case. Through the enactment of the Nagarwala case, Gustad makes an important political statement. The catalyst which brings about this contact is the 'fictional' character of Major Bilimoria. This is a composite character fashioned out of the real life State Bank cashier, Sohrab Nagarwala, the Parsi agent from Research and Analysis Wing who was close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. The storyline, however, is more centrally concerned with the events that had overtaken Nagarwala. He was the man involved in the Rs. 60 lakhs scam that had rocked the Indira
Gandhi Government in 1971. He claimed that he had received a phone call from the Prime Minister instructing him to hand over that large sum of money to a messenger. But this was never accepted by the Prime Minister's office. And Nagarwalla was charged with embezzlement and arrested. He died in rather mysterious circumstances before he could be brought to trial. The missing sum of money was also the root cause of 1971 war between India and Pakistan, which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. Since this involved a member of the Parsi community, the Parsis were considerably worried and the death of Nagarwala itself raised many eyebrows. Here is a view of a Parsi about the incident:

The Nagarwala, incident because it involved a Parsi, jolted the self-image of the community no less. Having long ago lost their literature to the vandalism of Alexander the Accursed, and their dance, music, art, poetry and even their language to the process of adapting to a new home in India the Parsis have developed a particularized culture from a mixture of ancient myth and legend overlaid by a life sustaining sense of recent achievement. Gratified to have earned an honourable place in the country of their adoption through their contribution to every field of endeavour and proud of having retained a strong ethical tradition the Parsis were deeply anguished by the ambivalent role Nagarwala had played in the sordid story.7
Mistry uses this incident to bring together the personal and the political. The abuse of power and the corruption among the political elite reach out menacingly into the private lives of ordinary citizens. But this situation never improves. Then Gustad finds a headless bandicoot at the base of his vinca and again a headless cat in the compound. All these contribute to Gustad’s unhappiness landing him in a dark land of suspicion. He was equally disturbed by the sufferings of his daughter Roshan from enervating diarrhoea. Furthermore his quarrel with Mr. Rabadi goes on worsening day by day.

Some characters in the novel make illuminating comments. For instance Gustad thinks about the position of the Parsis in Bombay and comments thus: “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 Whiteman to get half as much” (55). Regarding changes in the streetnames in Bombay, Dinshawaji’s comments on the notion of displacement:

“You are wrong. Names are so important. I grew up on Lamington Road. But it has disappeared, in its place is Dadasaheb Bhadkhamar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road. Now suddenly its on Lokamanya Tilak Marg. I live at Sleater Road. Soon that will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at Flora Fountain. And one fine day the name changes. So what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the
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!' (74)

Dinshawji thinks that Parsis are impaired,

'What days those were, yaar. What fun we used to have' Dinshawji touched the corners of his lips to wipe the foam. 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 (38)

He also accuses her for bringing about disharmony in Maharashtra, "How much bloodshed, how much rioting she caused" (39). Besides this, frequent references to the war against the neighbouring countries serve as a historical backdrop to the events that the novel unfolds.

The novel, while representing this larger rhythm with universal significance, tries to bring together smaller rhythms within its fold. One notices that alongside the main plot there runs a sub-plot in which the return of Sohrab is traced. The cure of the illness of Roshan through the magico-religious rites performed by Mrs.Dilnavaz is again another fictional constituent. Miss. Kutpitia's name implies in Gujarati a "quarrel some one." Her magic spells are reduced to being a mere manifestation of women's irrational nature. Mistry pokes fun at
this 'inferior' female behaviour. Miss. Kutpitia, being a spinster and a little crazy, is to be allowed her superstitions.

However, Dilnavaz, the happily married woman and a fulfilled mother, believes in Miss. Kutpitia's "jaadu-mantar." This is directly attributed to her concern and love for her husband and children. So whenever she is not cooking, filling water, or settling quarrels between her husband and their son Sohrab, she is found conspiring with Miss. Kutpitia in creating spells for the well-being of her family. Miss. Kutpitia wanted to offer help and advice on matters unexplainable by laws of nature. Dilnavaz becomes unnerved when her husband and her son carry on fighting and abusing each other very frequently. Her son loses interest in I.I.T. He leaves his house in violent protest against his father's anger. Dilnavaz is equally disturbed by the illness of her daughter, Roshan, that goes on worsening day by day. Sohrab's intractability is sought to be removed by a spell involving a lizard's tail, limes, chillies. And even poor Tehmul is pressed into service to cure Roshan's illness.

In fact, the misfortunes that befall Gustad's family are interpreted by Miss. Kutpitia from her own ideological point of view rooted in superstitions, culturally accepted and transmitted from generation to generation. Killing a live bird in the house – the live chicken brought by Gustad to celebrate his son's selection to I.I.T. and the birthday of Roshan – is very ominous according to Miss. Kutpitia.
What happened at the dinner party has to be interpreted in the light of the incident which took place at Miss. Kuptitia's home the same day. On the same day in the morning, Miss. Kuptitia killed a lizard on her breakfast table. Its broken tail was wriggling and dancing for about five minutes. She declared that the ominous incident also casts its spell over the dinner party. The initial atmosphere of songs and jokes of the party sink into much sound and fury when Gustad and Sohrab show their differences, anger, and argument with the unwarranted declaration by Sohrab that he is not going to join the I.I.T. Lights also go off suddenly much to the displeasure of all. Darkness symbolizes the eclipse of the father-son relationship. Nobody feels like eating and the whole effort goes unappreciated: "of the nine chicken potions six remained in the dish" (50). When this matter is brought to the notice of Miss. Kuptitia by the apparently worried mother, Kuptitia attributes all this to "jaadu-mantar" (63):

In that case, only one thing is possible. Somebody has fed him something bad.
In his food, or in a drink. Definitely Jaadu-Mantar.

(63)

She further contends that somebody tries to gain the interest of Sohrab out of his own loss of interest. She also maintains that Roshan's illness is caused by evil eye and that there are ways and means to get things right. So Dilnavaz is instructed by Kuptitia to perform some magic rites for a few days before the setting of the sun.
In this process, the trial goes on and the results are far from being satisfactory. Sohrab drinks some lime juice prepared by his mother who takes advice from Miss. Kutpitia about some magic rites in order to regain Sohrab's lost interest. But this too is of no avail. Still there is little effect on Sohrab's mind. Instead, things go from bad to worse; “Sohrab revolts and leaves home” and Roshan's illness becomes a matter of great concern.

Miss. Kutpitia says that Roshan's illness is caused by the evil eye. To protect her from it, she asks Dilnavaz to perform a ritual:

>'Then why are you nodding? Listen. Take your needle and thread, a nice strong thread with a big knot at the end. Select a yellow lime, and seven chillies. Chillies must be green, not turning red. Never red. String them all together with the needle. Lime goes at the bottom then hang the whole thing over your door, inside the house.'

(149-50)

This ritual consists of preparing a taveej. Each time Roshan walks under the hanging, the evil eye is supposed to become less and less powerful. “Actually, once you hang it everyone in your family will benefit” (150). But even this does not relieve Roshan from her illness. Then Kutpitia confirms that it is both evil eye and some dark force that are both responsible for Roshan’s continuous illness. Ultimately, she discovers what it is and makes Dilnavaz see that the person
behind it is a man who has a dog, suggesting that Mr. Rabadi is the man. As regards Sohrab’s not coming home, Miss. Kutpitia asks Dilnavaz to get some nails of Tehmul to burn in coal fire. And when the nails are melted, then turmeric and cayenne powders are to be sprinkled:

“They would open wide Tehmul’s channels,” Miss Kutpitia had explained, “through which his spirit would reach and yank the evil out of Sohrab’s brain.” (153)

Dilnavaz sprinkles a pinch of the yellow and red powders on the black molten mass. Even this helps little.

Things rush towards a climax: the arrest of Major Bilimoria on the charge of corruption takes place, frightening Gustad. As Mani Meitei says:

“Gustad’s horizon is completely darkened with fear and uncertainty that his complicity may be established.”

In the meantime Ghulam Mohammed from whom he receives the package asks Gustad in a semi-threatening tone to return the whole amount in one month’s time to save Bilimoria’s life. And to make things worse, Roshan’s illness continues and even the worst thing happens: There is a relapse. When Gustad visits Dr. Paymaster to
report to him about Roshan's continuous illness, he is taunted by the
doctor who thinks that he modified the prescription at will so that the
illness assumes an unexpected proportion. Poverty haunts Gustad. He
cannot make both ends meet. He sells his camera and his wife's two
gold marriage bangles. It is at this time that his rose plant, the Vinca
and Subjo bushes, are hacked to the ground. Roshan's big doll in bridal
array, which she received as the first prize in Annual School Day
raffle, is also lost. It is at this critical juncture again, that Dinshawji is
hospitalized after a sudden collapse in the office. The first great blow
in Gustad's life comes in the form of the death of Dinshawji despite his
prayers for the recovery of both Roshan and Dinshawji. Shortly after
all these incidents, Gustad makes a trip to Delhi to meet the Major.
Bilimoria is asked to get money from the S.B.I. director on an
emergency basis to finance guerilla training pending official sanction.
The Prime Minister's voice is impersonated in the telephone. After
that Major Bilimoria is asked to write a confession which he does
without any second thought.

But as soon as the money is received, the Prime Minister's office
intercepts the money before it was used for the original purpose.
Knowing the trick, Bilimoria kept ten lakh rupees for distribution to
his friends. Before that he was arrested and put under detention and
tortured cruelly until he returned the money:
On the bed lay nothing more than a shadow. The shadow of the powerfully-built army man who once lived in Khodadad Building. His hairline had receded and sunken cheeks made the bones jut sharp and grotesque. The regal handlebar moustache was no more. His eyes had disappeared within their sockets. The neck what he could see of it, was as scrawny as poor behesti Dinshawji's, while under the sheet there seemed barely a trace of those strong shoulders and deep chest which Gustad and Dilnavaz used to point out as a good example to their sons, reminding them always to walk erect with chest out and stomach in, like Major Uncle. (267)

Bilimoria gets four years' imprisonment and while serving his term he dies of heart attack and his funeral takes place at the Tower of Silence. Kutpitia performs the last remedy i.e., lizard ritual, amidst a warning:

'You don't know what you are asking. Terrible things could happen'. Miss Kutpitia's eyes narrowed her voice dire, full of unspeakable events. 'And not all your sorrow or regret later on will do any good, or change one single thing'. (275)

Some miracle or coincidence does take place: Roshan gets better, Gustad returns home safe from his trip to Delhi, and even Sohrab's absence, Dilnavaz thinks, "would now somehow be put right" (292).
The novelist shows the supremacy of the Divine power by creating the character of Tehmul, Gustad's neighbour. While describing the death of Tehmul, Mistry writes. Surprisingly the day Sohrab returns, he changes his mind. Tehmul dies:

Tehmul dropped without a sound, his figure folding gracefully. The dance was over. (333)

In this context the word dance becomes meaningful, for it symbolizes man's helplessness at the hands of relentless destiny. The author also refers to God as a potter who shapes the human vessel according to his own design. And the 'clay pot' shatters into pieces when the Master puppeteer chooses to end the 'dance' of life. This interpretation reveals the basic progression of the story, which seems to convey that the human actor must have a resigned attitude because he is subjected to the immanent will.

At last the family of Gustad returns to normal. Roshan's condition improves. Sohrab as usual pays visits to his mother during his father's office hours. Dilnavaz greets him with joy and relief. She hugs him fervently, presses her hands upon his cheeks, laments that he was losing weight for lack of proper nourishment: "How long it has been! Won't you come back now? Haven't you tortured me enough?" (320). Mrs. Dilnavaz informs him about the death of Dinshawji, all about Ghulam Mohammed, and the tragic death of Major Bilimoria.
She implores Sohrab to stay and talk to his father nicely, who would be coming in a short while from the funeral of Major Bilimoria. "Daddy will be home in a little while. Just talk to him nicely and then" (320).

Dilnavaz comes out with the benign qualities of mother in these words, "He is your father. He will always love you and want the best for you" (321). Sohrab foresees a fight between him and his father because he knows he is responsible for the latter's unhappiness. Sohrab reacts: "It's no use. I spoilt all his dreams, he is not interested in me any more" (321). But the mother rules out that anything untoward would happen: "so much has happened since you left. Daddy has changed. It will be different now" (321). The barrier between the father and the son gives way and dissolves.

Envied by most friends for his good health, the broad-shouldered Gustad adopts a tough and unsentimental stance in most situations. Turning bitter and ironic about his son Sohrab's assertion of independence, he prefers total estrangement from Sohrab to appearing soft. He is touched by Dinshawji's death, but not moved to tears. When Dilnavaz suggests that it would be alright if "crying comes", Gusted lifts his eyes defiantly to her face, so she could see them dry. Although he travels to New Delhi to relieve Jimmie's loneliness in death, he does not shed a tear for him either. Like Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Gustad seems afraid to acknowledge for others the compassion and humanity he has always
shown Tehmul. In the final scene of the novel, after a brick has fatally hit Tehmul in the riots that accompany the municipality's attempt to remove the wall, he cradles Tehmul's still-warm body in his arms "with a single mighty effort" (335), watched in fear and admiration by Sohrab and others. Without a fumbling Gustad carries the body to the bed in Tehmul's flat. As he prays over the dead body, tears begin to well in his closed eyes.

At this significant moment, Gustad comes out of himself to be one with death and one with life. He prays for all, cries for all, for himself, for his papa, for mama, for grandpa and grandma, for Tehmul, for Dinshawji, for Jimmy "all who had to wait for so long..." (337). He prays for the mercy of God on all souls for the end is come, maybe to start again from the beginning. Out of this vast vacuum, there emerges a profound meaning that signifies the archetypal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth motifs. It is at this moment that Gustad accepts the return of his prodigal son who comes to him, who has waited motionless in the doorway through several cycles of prayers that Gustad says for Tehmul. It is in complete surrender that the father and son lose their personalities and exorcise their hatred of each other. Then they reach out to each other.

Gustad turned around. He saw his son standing in the doorway, and each held the other's eyes. Still he sat, gazing upon his son, and Sohrab waited motionless in the doorway, till at last Gustad got to
his feet slowly. Then he went up and put his arms around him. 'yes' said Gustad, running his bloodstained fingers once through Sohrab's hair. 'Yes,' he said, 'yes,' and hugged him tightly once more. (337)

Whether he believes in God or not, Rohinton Mistry uses anecdotes related to gods and goddesses and miracles throughout the novel. The most important thing Mistry wants to emphasize is religious tolerance to suggest that all religions are equal. The pavement artist, who has painted gods and goddesses from all religions of the world on the wall, is one through whom Indian secularism is reinforced. The director of Morcha shouts thus:

The wall of Hindu and Muslim, Sikh and Christian, Parsi and Buddhist! A holy wall, a wall suitable for worship and devotion, whatever your faith! (326)

The destruction of Gustad's wall is turned into a positive happening because it prompts him to take down the blackout he had pasted on his windows and ventilators at the time of the Chinese attack in 1962:

He stood upon the chair and pulled at the paper covering the ventilators. As the first sheet tore away, a frightened moth flew out and circled the room. (339)
The tearing down of the blackout paper could also signal a readiness on the part of the Parsis to let their Iranian past go and to let "new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders."9

In *Such a Long Journey* the female characters do not journey at all. They remain stationary while the world around them moves and changes. Theirs is a static universe where they are even denied the knowledge of their own stultification and repression by their creator. This novel which is a fictional account of recent history is in the genre of what Greene and Kahn have called history as written by men, from a male perspective.

In *Such a Long Journey* Rohinton Mistry comes out as a critical realist so far as the treatment of the social reality is concerned. His consciousness of the social and political aspects of a particular historical period shows him to be possessing a vision of the larger rhythm of life in which all forms of human happiness and misery are seen woven inseparably. Mistry’s interest in the predicament of modern life and in the effect of degenerating society on life are all well depicted in the novel. In *Such a Long Journey* various characters belonging to the minority community express their anguish at the changing pattern of communal relationships in society. Rohinton Mistry’s sensitivity to the impending dangers to his community is
expressed by his characters' consciousness. On the whole, *Such a Long Journey* is Rohinton Mistry's masterpiece.

*Such a Long Journey* has been reviewed widely and hailed as a great success. Reviewing the book in *India Abroad* (November 21, 1991), Rochelle D'Souza marvels at the "photographic memory" that serves Mistry so well in furnishing "a wealth of tiny details that flesh out the thinnest possible plot and endows the writing with the laughter, sadness, anecdote, character, and speech patterns of which memorable novels are made". In *New York Times Book Review* David Ray highlights the "vivid picture of India" Mistry provides in this novel and notes the novelist's gift for "erotic satire." Not only does Mistry catch "the unsettling effects on everyday life of the many upheavals afflicting India in the 1960s and 70s, he also provides "sharp affectionate sketches of Indian family life," and "fascinating" portraits of Bombay's crowded precincts. But Ray does not find Gustad "a convincing figure ... who never seems more than a kind of suffering drudge, a bezzled gull drawn into a world he does not understand." David Townsend, reviewing the book in *Quill & Quire* praises *Such a Long Journey* as a "brilliantly controlled novel" which combines "the interest of compelling subject matter with depth of characterization and symbolic density."10
REFERENCES


