

Domestic crisis in Rohinton Mistry's Novel *Family Matters*

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Abstract

Rohinton Mistry as a social humanist. Mistry has viewed the life of a middle-class Parsi family in Bombay from his Canadian point of vantage. The novel focuses on the oppression and solace of individual and family relationships. The novel is set in the city of Mumbai, where Mistry was born and grew up, and tells the story of a middle-class Parsi family living through a domestic crisis. It hints at the current and existing effects of public policies on private life. This Bombay epic is a three generational series of events and mourns for the negation of Parsi family. In short, Mistry desires peace to prevail in the society by understanding the various problems of individuals. In Mistry's novels, there are no references to Canada but only nostalgia of the political and social disorder of India's postcolonial experience.

Key words: Humanist, oppression, solace, domestic, generational

Introduction

Rohinton Mistry as a social humanist. Mistry has viewed the life of a middle-class Parsi family in Bombay from his Canadian point of vantage. *Family Matters* is the third novel by Indian-born author Rohinton Mistry. It was first published by McClelland and Stewart in 2002. The novel is set in the city of Mumbai, where Mistry was born and grew up, and tells the story of a middle-class Parsi family living through a domestic crisis. Through one family, Mistry conveys everything from the dilemmas among India's Parsis, Persian-descended Zoroastrians, to the wider concerns of corruption and communalism. Mistry writes in simple language, using a lot of dialogue.

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Domestic crisis in *Family Matters*

In *Family Matters*, Rohinton Mistry has explored human frailty in old age that arises to question between emotional and economic and the moral and spiritual implications. Although, its' specific geographical and cultural setting is in India. *Family Matters* illustrates universal issues of impartiality care taking and family relationships.

“*Family Matters*” is very simple and clear based on an ordinary man and his Family. Nariman Vakeel is the protagonist of this novel. His old age is shadowed by Parkinson disease and the heritage of an unhappy marriage. Nariman Vakeel's situation is common enough in some respects. He enjoys an independent life in his own apartment even with advancing Parkinson's disease in which he shares his life with his two stepchildren until he falls and becomes bedridden. This crisis provokes a different behaviour among his stepchildren that is motivated by their own selfishness because of earlier family crisis.

The novel sets in the mid-1990s, it again blends past and present of Nariman Vakeel by Parkinson disease. Then, the novel reflects on the incident that leads to the joint deaths of his wife and former lover and the family's subsequent fractures. As a protagonist, Nariman is gradually reduced to silence and ultimately death. The voices and role of his stepson, Yezad, and nine year old grandson, Jehangir take over as the novel's further progresses.

Coomy and Jal Contractor's own father dies young and they are unwillingly forced into a new domestic arrangement. Their mother seeks the security of a marriage to Nariman Vakeel who carries them with him. Therefore, he is forced by family pressure to marry a Parsi widow with two children, Jal and Coomy. Under the family compulsion, Nariman sacrifices his love with a non-Parsi, Lucy Braganza and unwillingly yields to the marriage with Yasmin Contractor without interest. Nariman soon adds a daughter of his own, Roxana his newly acquired stepchildren.

Nariman's two step children, Coomy Contractor and Jal Contractor have grown up with awful memories. Coomy is stubborn selfishness and Jal is the other victim to an equally dangerous passivity. An accident, Nariman becomes bedridden and helpless at the mercy of his children by the cause of old age. They react to their father's changed position from benevolent to unwanted burden in different ways. Coomy forces Nariman to move into Roxana's overcrowded house because of her inconvenient position. There, Roxana lives with her husband Yezad, and their two boys, Murad and Jehangir in small flat of Pleasant Villa. Yezad and Roxana, a young couple and their two sons Murad and Jehangir live together in a small flat. The usual of family life is totally changed by the arrival of Roxana's father Nariman Vakeel. Nariman's step-children Coomy and Jal try to dispose of once his health deteriorates. But, as a real daughter of Nariman, Roxana makes a decision to nurse her father.

In *Family Matters*, ethical ambiguities develop in virtually every relationship and situation that springs from a range of concerns. Indeed, Roxana family has to face the everyday additional expenses for the old man.

When the medication ran out and Roxana went to purchase the next lot, she discovered that what Coomy had given her as her father's pension did not cover even the cost of the pills. (FM, 187)

Perhaps, Coomy uses Nariman's illness as a way to exact revenge on him for his treatment of her mother. Coomy holds a portion of the pension for caring of Nariman and for loose of her past. Then, the corruption has a vital place even into the family of the Yezad Chenoy. Roxana responds, "Pappa is not a football. I won't behave like them". Ultimately, the costs of this situation are deadly for her half-sister Coomy whose attempts to stop her stepfather's return. Coomy has an idea to damage the plaster ceiling of her apartment purposefully it results in an outburst from her brother:

Family does not matter to you! You keep nursing your bitterness instead of nursing Pappa. I've begged you for thirty years to let it go, to forgive, to look for peace. (FM, 193)

The portrayal of Roxana's care of her father provides a vivid illustration of the costs of care. Roxana's selfless to care for her father under strained conditions and Coomy's self preserving avoidance of care giving even with living in more comfortable surroundings have received the greater part of the care recipient's assets. Further, challenges and conflicts frequently accompany with an old person's loss of independence.

Nariman's Parkinson disease is linked to Osteoporosis. He breaks his leg when out for a walk that leads him to bed rest in Chateau Felicity building, under the production of Coomy. Eventually, the plaster on Nariman's leg gives the idea to Coomy to shift and keep him at the Chenoy's flat for recovering. *Family Matters'* Characters are again furnished with a full complement of ailments. Coomy's brother, Jal is partially deaf and struggles with a faulty hearing aid. The subjects of mobility versus immobility, decay and mortality are explored through Nariman's way of life.

Nariman comes to exist only in the life of the mind that the theme of imprisonment. He struggles to perform the simplest tasks of his needs. Roxana and Yezad struggle every day to maintain their family from the financial risks. Coomy fights vainly with bitterness that she blames the old man for her mother's untimely death. Coomy and Jal hesitate the unpleasant physical caring for the old man. Coomy and Yezad refuse to touch Nariman's the bedpan cause of horrible smell. Their repulsion is a part with their compulsive desire to exercise control over their environments. For example, this urge is harmful for two figures Lucy and Yasmin whose battle for control of Nariman sends them over the edge. They plunge to their deaths from the roof

of Chateau Felicity. Thus, the breakdown of family life is linked to physical and psychological sufferings.

Physical corruptions and the inevitable changes are linked with social corruption characteristic of modern Bombay. The moral corruption of characters is often for commendable reasons and engages in subterfuge. For example, Yezad Chenoy uses his family's budget money to gamble on the illegal lottery 'Matka' that makes losses him. Yet, he does it with hope to face the increased expenses for the arrival of his Parkinson father-in-law. Similarly, His son, Jehangir is tempted to betray his role as a school homework monitor, who obtains money for his classmates' mistakes for his family needs.

This moral ambiguity in motivation is at the heart of the novel. Family Matters repeatedly returns to question the negative outcome of the well intended behave. A number of situations have themselves a kind of double construction to lead the novel to end. Roxana innocently suggests the unskilled handyman Edul Munshi to Coomy to fix ceiling but it results both deaths. Most intractable of all, the sequence of events appears to initiate all the Chenoy family's subsequent troubles. That is Nariman's inability to give up his relationship with Lucy Braganza, even after his marriage to Yasmin.

After his marriage, Lucy follows him and takes a job with a neighbor in order to be near him and repeatedly threatens suicide. Again, Nariman follows her up to the roof of Chateau Felicity to advice against her from jumping. Even though, he tries to calm his former lover and he worries for Lucy in her distressed obsession. At one point, he wonders himself that is about Lucy's endless love.

Such moral complexity gives a new twist to Mistry's repeated concern with the idea of goodness as understood in Zoroastrianism. Each of Mistry's works contains a reference to the prime necessities of the Zoroastrian faith. Family Matter's every move seems with danger either to oneself or to others. Coomy behaves badly towards Nariman because she fears the disturbance of her carefully ordered existence. She doubts her ability to manage and perhaps subconscious act of revenge for the way Nariman treated her mother.

Here, the point is not only to measure these characters' good behaviour but also to show how they fail to meet the Zoroastrian faiths. In short, Family Matters is concerned with these causes and how one interprets for connections between past and present. Characteristically, the novel centres on the difficulties of making sense of narrative with controlling time and change.

Conclusion

Finally, this myth supports the basic Zoroastrian belief of the eternal battle between good and evil that rages within the soul of all men. Thus, it is important for human beings to remember their origins through such devices. Shattered dreams of immigration also trouble the pages of *Family Matters*.

The immigration story used to have two parts: dream and reality. But over the years the dream-of prosperity, house, car, CD player, computer, clean air, snow, lakes, mountains, abundance-had been renounced, since it was not going to come true (FM, 240).

Nariman is a man who leads the race in searching for identity and individuality at one stage and when he gets it he dies. So, the novel *Family Matters* progressively depicts Parsis' plight in the earlier novels of Rohinton Mistry.

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