

## **Family Matters by Rohinton Mistry: A Triangle of Love, Care and Money**

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“Family Matters” is one of the finest piece of work by Rohinton Mistry, it is appreciated by everyone, although the same accolade was enjoyed by Mistry’s earlier two novels “Such a Long Journey” and “A Fine Balance” also but the present piece of work has a subtle depth which speaks of Mistry’s Master craftsmanship. The basic theme of novel is all about a middle class Parsi family of Bombay. The story is about a seventy years old Nariman Vakeel suffering from Parkinson’s Disease, he is the Head of the Family and is a retired professor of English Literature, he is bound to stay with his step children Coomy and Jal. The present paper is an effort to study that how a person in his last days of life is being treated as a burden by his own children. Mistry has beautifully and realistically handled this issue in his third novel “Family Matters”.

Nariman Vakeel lives with his step children in Chateau Felicity a big and spacious apartment but in his last days of life he is feeling all alone. His children’s have their own life and they are busy in it and so they are least bothered about his loneliness.

“I agree with you papa, the sources of pleasure are many our mind contains worlds enough to amuse us for an eternity plus you have your books and record player and radio why leave the flat at all? It’s like heaven in here. This building isn’t called Chateau Felicity for nothing. I would lock out the hell of the outside world and spend all my days indoors.” “You couldn’t,” said Nariman, “Hell has ways of permeating heaven’s membrane.” He began softly, “‘Heaven, I’m in heaven,’ ” which irritates Coomy even more, and he stopped humming. (6).

The only pleasant reason for him to be happy is his own daughter Roxana and her family, Roxana is the daughter of Yasmeen and Nariman Vakeel and is married to Yezad and is blessed with two son’s Murad and Jahangir. This family stays in a comparatively smaller apartment Pleasant Villa, This Apartment was Gifted to them by Nariman Vakeel as a Wedding gift. The story starts with the opening scene of Nariman going for a walk, and his step daughter Coomy scolding him like a small child for not going out for a walk, as it is rainy season and Nariman might hurt himself, here the care and worry shown by Coomy for his father is not because she

loves or care for him so much, but only because Coomy is tired of taking care of his Father and now if anything happened to him, things will be more critical for her. Although for Nariman the only charm of the day is his evening walks which he enjoys the most, because for the whole of the day he is restricted to his house only and for the whole day he waits for the evening, here Mistry wants to convey through the opening of the novel itself that, how people in their old age are treated as a burden by their own children's and their liking and disliking is hardly considered by them, on the contrary when children's are small their parents always feels happy in fulfilling their every demand. This novel contains the immense pain and suffering of a person in his last days of life. In the following scene Nariman has gone for a walk even after his daughter's resistance, and finally he injured himself and got a scratch on his elbow, on coming back home he got a good scolding from his daughter. Although he has been good to Coomy and Jal as a Father but unfortunately both of them have never accepted him as their Father. Even when they were very young they used to address him as New Papa, which was later modified to Papa, on being convinced by their mother Yasmeen.

As far as life of Nariman is concerned or his relation with his family is concerned, from the beginning itself his relations were not normal with everyone in his family. Be it his parents or his wife Yasmeen or now his step children's Jal and Coomy. He is not loved and respected by his step children's, at this stage of life his past haunted him ,especially the memories of his young days love Lucy is still with him, even at various instances in the novel itself, Nariman starts conversing with her and deep in his heart he feel sorry for Lucy. Although one very strong reason Jal and Coomy are having for not showing concern towards their old, ailing Father was his association with Lucy and because of this association only their mother Yasmeen had to go through a difficult phase in her life.

In the initial few pages of the novel , Nariman celebrates his Birth day, the very special guests of the evening is Roxana and her Family, Nariman was eagerly waiting for that moment when her daughter with her family will come to meet him. Although Coomy and Jal enjoys a good relationship with Roxana, during their childhood Coomy and Jal were deprived of their Father's love so as a small baby Roxana was loved by both of them very much, even being half sister Roxana as a child was the apple of their eyes. So that particular evening of Nariman's Birthday everybody enjoyed the meals prepared by Coomy. Yezad, Jal and Nariman had discussions on Political scenario in India, Government corruption and all the current affairs. Nariman really had a great time that day. This scene of novel also shows us that how children's do not have any time for their old and ailing parents, children's today are so busy in their own lives that they have really no time for their parents. But when their children's spend even a little time with their parents it's a great moment for the parent's.

In the story everything was going good until one fine day Nariman during his usual evening walk injured him and got his ankle broken while crossing the road, all the problems in the novel actually started taking shape from here. Nariman was then taken to the hospital; he was then admitted there for two days. Later it was revealed by the doctor that his ankle will take some more weeks in healing. Since Coomy was

already tired of taking care of her Father, so now after accident a completely dependent bedridden Stepfather was too much for her. So finally it was the time for Coomy to take an important decision regarding Nariman's care, it was decided by Jal and Coomy that they will shift Nariman to Roxana's house, and finally they reached Roxana's home one day with Nariman in the ambulance, so that Roxana cannot deny to the proposal, Roxana on the other hand was not informed about her father's accident, so looking at her Father's condition she was no way in a position to step back but to accept the proposal. This particular incident forces us to think that how children's are being loved and cared by their parents, if a child falls ill both Mother and Father leaves no stone unturned to take care for them, but the same parents in their old days are treated as a burden by their children's, and they plan and scheme to shift the responsibility of their old parents from one to another.

Here situation of Roxana is no way good since she is undergoing a tough time as her financial condition doesn't allow her to bear the responsibility of one more member, even if that member is her old ailing father, so here she has to adjust her family expenses along with taking care of her Father. There on the other hand Coomy plans to delay her Father's return to Chateau Felicity by asking Jal to intentionally hammer the roof so that they can give excuse to Roxana and Yezad that overhead tank is overflowing and so condition of Nariman's room is very bad and so the stay of Papa at Roxana's place can be extended. Even at one point of time Roxana and Yezad even decides that they will ask for some monetary support from Coomy and Jal but even they denied. So Chenoy family keeps on struggling for the expenses of the months, even the small kids contributed to arrangements for the money, Murad the elder son of Roxana starts walking and saved his bus fare, Jahangir as a home work monitor was bribed by some rich students of the class for not complaining to the Teacher, Yezad starts trying his luck at Matka. So on the whole family tension is exacerbated and the limits of responsibility and obligation are explored with a full measure of anguish.

So "Family Matters" is all about an ailing and dying father, his two middle aged step children's, his own daughter and her family and is all about the matters pertaining to typical middle class Indian family, it is all about the pain and suffering of an old man, it's about the trauma a brother and sister has faced after losing their father in a very small age ,accepting a completely new person as their father, it's about the world where money fulfills all requirements and parents in their old age are treated merely as a burden and a responsibility which nobody wants to fulfill.

### **Work Cited**

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