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Family Matters

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AUTHOR'S MANIFESTO

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Family Matters

Family Matters is Rohinton Mistry's highly praised third novel, which was shortlisted for Man Booker prize and won several major literary awards internationally. *Family Matters* is an impressive and masterful novel. It is well detailed in its account of family apartment living in Bombay. Mistry has viewed the life of a middle-class Parsi family in Bombay from his Canadian point of view. In *Family Matters*, Rohinton Mistry has explored human imperfection in old age that Arises to question between emotional and economic and the moral and spiritual suggestions. *Family Matters* illustrates universal issues of detachment care taking and family relationships.

Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters* focus upon the problems and preservation of family values. The novels expose the mutual family politics in the modern society. The novelist describes the importance and preservation of family values through the family and reflects the psychological stance of the members of family towards their aging and dying elders. The novel is a representation of harsh realities and selfish human nature of the characters who expresses the status of an individual in relation to family, community and society. *Family Matters* is also the novel depicting the Parsi life in Bombay but with some difference. The center of attention once again is indeed the routine life of Parsi families. It is the successive story of three generations or could be said of four generation of a Parsi family; the first comprises the father of Nariman Vakil, second comprises of Nariman Vakil and his wife Yasmin Contractor, third generation includes Jal, Coomy, Roxana and Yezad Chenoy and finally, the children of Yezad and Roxana; Murad and Jehangir. The latter part of the book is narrated by Jehangir Chenoy. It is through the observations of nine years old Jehangir who spell, by his depiction that family politics fill the novel. It is an action-packed novel that presents the family drama and real portrait of present

state of Bombay in all walks of life with its salient features of cosmopolitan city and corruption and cheap politics.

In *Family Matters*, 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. *Family Matters* is almost completely set within four walls. More exactly, the novel has as its setting two flats, Yezad and Roxana as well as Coomy and Jal. In the novel, Mistry does not merely understand Parsi community's fear as a form of degeneration both spiritually and culturally. *Family Matters* is a particular way of family matters. Mistry explores the expected fragmentation of such ideals in practice and compulsions of duty to family, community and Zoroastrian faith.

Although, 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 Yasmin and former lover Lucy 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.

Family Matters consists of twenty chapters with an epilogue, describing the story five years ahead. It is one of the pathetic novels which describe various changes occurring in the fast moving world. It not only presents the failing health of the chief protagonist Nariman Vakeel,

but also the people, and their family structure. The novel is printed in two episodes. The simple printed episode and the italics episode, which re-construct Nariman's past which makes him nostalgic and guilty and they are in the form of dream stepdaughter, Coomy and Stepson, Jal, in a large flat named Chateau Felicity in the politically corrupt Bombay of the 1990s, which was re-named Mumbai in 1995 by the Shiv Sena. His gradually debilitating Parkinson's disease and a broken ankle lead him to depend upon Coomy and Jal's help for nearly everything. Coomy bathes her stepfather grudgingly twice a week and grimaces when the old man humbly asks for the simplest of human needs. Jal goes along with what his bossy sister thinks is best. Coomy and Jal's half-sister-Nariman's biological daughter, Roxana-lives with her husband, Yezad and two sons, Murad and Jehangir in a two room flat called Pleasant Villa which Nariman purchased as Roxana's dowry. 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 stepchildren, Coomy Contractor and Jal Contractor have grown up with awful memories. Coomy is stubborn selfishness and Jal is the other victim to unequally dangerous passivity.

An autobiographical stroke is given to the novel *Family Matters*, when Mistry states that 'he has never taken care of a dying parent'. After reading the humiliating details of Nariman's Parkinson's disease and the guilt of the children for not looking after their old, dying family

relates that having elderly and dying family members - is only a way of life for those who grow up in India. *Family Matters* is the story of taking care of our aging and dying elders which is a worldwide issue. There is considerable volume of writing on the clash between tradition and modernity, including Mistry, go deep into the subject and discuss the issue from various perspectives. Mistry's fiction makes the reader ask: How to maintain a fine balance between the attitudes of the two generation? Who is to be blamed for this tension between the two generations? In Mistry's novels, parents generally hold modern education and modern ideas responsible for all the ills of our society. Nariman's father opines: "Modern ideas have filled Nariman's head. He never learnt to preserve that fine balance between tradition and modernness" (FM 15).

Nariman Vakeel, a widower, had been married to Yasmin Contractor. Jal and Coomy his stepchildren, are unmarried. Coomy's attitude towards her stepfather is rude. Jal often requests Nariman not to go out for evening walks. To him "And lawlessness is the one certainty in the streets of Bombay. Easier to find a gold nugget on the footpath than a tola of courtesy" (FM,3). During Nariman's seventy-ninth birthday, he comes home with scratch on his elbow and forearm, and a limp as he fell while crossing the road outside Chateau Felicity. He is irritated at the way Coomy shouts at him. Nariman says "in my youth, my parents controlled me and destroyed those years. Thanks to them, I married your mother and wrecked my middle years. Now you want to torment my old age. I won't allow it (FM,7). In reply Coomy says, "You ruined Mamma's life, and mine, and Jal's. I will not tolerate a word against her" Coomy and Jal addressed Nariman Vakeel as New Pappa when their mother re-married. It is during his birthday, Nariman becomes nostalgic. He thinks about his past lady love, Lucy Braganza, a Goan. Nariman's first love with Lucy was withdrawn by his parents' compulsion. Ultimately, Lucy had

provoked jealousy to his wife Yasmin that led to both their deaths in a fall from the roof. This religious and ethnic strain of tragic end has produced an irrational sense of blame in Jal and Coomy, and decaying guilt in Nariman. Her tensions between bitterness and caretaking are intertwined with tensions of moral and economic responsibilities. It is important to realize that Nariman's character is not only his tolerance but also the contrast favorably with his parents. During old age, he needs the help from others that provokes the memories his of past and long lost life.

Nariman's father blames books for Nariman's odd behaviour. He feels, "*Too many books. Modern ideas have filled Nari's head. He never learned to preserve that fine balance between tradition and modernness*" (FM,15). Roxana with her husband, Yezad and their two sons, Murad and Jehangir visit Chateau Felicity to celebrate Nariman's seventy-ninth birthday. Coomy's aggression burst on the birthday party by saying "no wonder he had ruined his own life, and everyone else's. No wonder he had carried on shamelessly with that Lucy Braganza, and destroyed Mamma's life and . . ." (FM,29). Nariman's parents are upset because their son "seems incapable of falling in love with a Parsi girl" (FM,14). Nariman's parents, his uncles and aunts, Gustad and Yezad all enter into conflicts with their children on the issue of caste and community. It is an open secret that the desire to preserve the traditional way of life, to preserve the culture, ethnicity and religion is of paramount importance for the old generation. The deteriorating health of Nariman, symbolizes the decaying condition of Parsi community. Both Coomy and Jal are unmarried and stand for the fixation of the Parsi community. Nariman injured his ankle and is taken to Dr. Fitter. He scolds Jal for bringing Nariman to him. He says:

Parsi men of today are useless, dithering idiots, the race had deteriorated. "When you think of our forefathers, the industrialist and shipbuilders who established the foundation

of modern India, the philanthropists who gave us our hospitals and schools and libraries and baags, what lustre they brought to our community and the nation. Demographics show we'll be extinct in fifty years. Maybe it's the best thing. What's the use of having spineless weaklings walking around, Parsi in name only (FM,51).

Dr. Fitter compares the Parsis of the past with the present ones. The past ones played a significant role in every aspect in developing the nation as compared to the present now. To LaCapra "the past has its own 'voices' that must be respected, especially when they resist or qualify the interpretations we would like to place on them" (LaCapra 63-64). During night, memory begins and haunts Nariman, as he his mind moves to his days with Lucy. Mistry successfully applies the flashback narration with fine mingling of time - present and time - past. In any work of fiction:

The span of time present in the story is not only as long as the time-span of every character's life and memory; it also represents everything acquired and passed on in a kind of memory-heritage from one generation to another. The time which is present in any story, therefore, must by implication at least-include, not only the totality of the character's lives but also inherited time of perhaps two or even three past generations, in terms of parents' and grandparents' recollections, and the much longer past which has become legend, the past of collective cultural memory. It is the character who chooses which past of the personal past, the family past and the ancestral past have to be revealed in order for the present to be realized and the future to happen. The past and the future are both always present, present in both sense of the world (Woodcock 155-156).

The past memories of Lucy made Nariman energetic, enthusiastic and joyous as he lay on bed alone. He remembers how Lucy employed herself as an ayah to the grand-children to Mrs.

and Mr. Arjani. Arjani's knew about the affair between Nariman and Lucy. Remembering about the religious controversy in which a priest had performed a *Novjote* ceremony for the son of a Parsi mother and non-Parsi father. Nariman's father intended the priest for performing the ceremony and:

it was renegades like him who would destroy this three-thousand-year-old religion; that Zoroastrianism had survived many setbacks in its venerable history. . .the ignorance of mischief-making priest was anything but-it was poison for the Parsi community (FM,132).

Nariman is suffering from the crisis of belongingness. The crisis takes him back to the roots of his community and he narrates the stories of Parsi traditions. Parsi families never keep cats. They consider them bad luck, because cats hate water, they never take a bath. For them, beliefs are more powerful than facts, as Parsis don't kill spiders, and they only eat the female chicken, never a cock the narration moves five years later in the epilogue. It throws light on the frequent quarrels between Yezad and Murad. Yezad's psycho-spiritual journey turns him into an orthodox on the death of Nariman. The cabinet of Yezad is framed with the pictures of Zarathustra, the Udvada fire-temple, silver model of the Asho Farohvar, Persian Empire, the ruins at Persepolis, and royal tombs of the Achaemenian and Sussanian dynasties.

After leaving Pleasant Villa, Yezad spent his times reading religious books and going to fire-temple. The Bombay Sporting Emporium did reopen with a new name: Shivaji Sports Equipment and Mrs. Kapur did not call Yezad. Roxana feels that the entire chain of events, starting with Grandpa's accident and ending with Mr. Kapur's murder, is God's way of bringing Yezad to prayer. Yezad talks turn philosophical. He answers every question in a philosophical manner. After moving to Chateau Felicity, Grandpa died a year later. During the last moments of

Grandpa, Daisy Aunty played violin for him, as she had promised. Murad falls in love with a non-Parsi girl. Yezad revolts against their love making. He says, “We are a pure Persian race, a unique contribution to this planet, and mixed marriages will destroy that” (FM,482).

Among the many changes in modern India, the ever increasing gulf between parents and children is a matter of great concern for Mistry. He depicts that young children no longer stand in awe of their parents. It is now fairly common to see parents’ and children entering into debates over any issue and parental authority have become causality through the vicissitudes of our history. This is exemplified in *Family Matters* when Yezad catches Murad kissing a girl. Like a typical traditional father, he says:

Your relationship with this girl is not possible.” “What relationship?” laughs Murad? “We’re just friends, I told you.” “A girl you kiss in that way cannot be just a friend. Either she’s your girlfriend, who is unacceptable, or you’re having your fun with her, which is even more unacceptable.” “We’re both having fun.’ (FM,482)

This indecent answer and Murad’s cool, casual, careless and non-serious attitude towards important issues of life deeply hurts Yezad. He makes it clear to Murad that there cannot be any possibility of marriage between the two because “for marriage, the rules are different.”

“Why?” asks Murad. “Because we are a pure Persian race, a unique contribution to this planet and mixed marriage will destroy that.” “You think you’re superior?” “Inferior or superior is not the question. Purity is a virtue worth preserving.” “Hitler had the same kind of ideas about purity, and look what happened.” (FM,482)

The conversation between the father and son renders it clear that the views of the two generations on important issues like love, friendship, marriage, religion, caste and community. The discussion above proves Yezad to be a traditional person who gives a lot of importance to

his caste, community and purity of breed but the son is casual about everything. Yezad blank out his pain in these words: “He listens to nothing. From the trivial to the most significant matters of life, he listens to not a word” (FM 482). What Yezad says of Murad is a general feeling among the parents about their children. At this sight, he shouts in anger:

I’m warning you, in this there can be no compromise. The ruler, the laws of our religion are absolute; this Maharashtrians cannot be your girl friend... He further warns his son, “You can have any friends you like, any race different or religion, but for a serious relationship, for marriage the rules are. (FM,482)

Towards the end, Yezad feels seriously by unexpected events in which he falls back on his revived faith more and more. He constantly struggles to stop the non Zoroastrian influence on two teenage sons. It seems that his attempts at religious ritual have not brought him peace. Mistry has remarked:

I’m not a practicing Parsi but the ceremonies are quite beautiful. As a child I Observed carefully in the same way as I did my homework, but it had no profound meaning for me. Zoroastrianism is about the opposition of good and evil. For the triumph of good, we have to make a choice. (Lambert, 7)

The characters have looked for happiness by following the dictates of duty as far as possible. But they often find that the duty comes into conflict with personal preference or immediate need.

The average Indian parents in contemporary society are frustrated because of the changing attitude of their children. The parents in Mistry’s fiction feel that our education system does not fulfill the requirements and aspirations of Indian society. Modern education may have made us capable of earning six digit figures but it fails to teach how to behave in a cultured and

decent manner. Parents in Mistry's works always blame modern education for destroying their children's culture-rootedness.

It is important to note that Murad is not just different from his father in the ideas and opinions; he is quite non-serious about significant things. His inflexibility, his insulting tone, his non-serious attitude towards "most significant matters of life" is unacceptable to Yezad. The father declares that he won't tolerate his son's association with that "parjaat girl". But Murad is too adamant and he declares that his father is becoming more and more fanatical and that his ideas make him feel like vomiting.

The father and son also fight with each other over the matter of religious practices. Yezad wants to maintain the purity of his prayer area and he does not want Murad to enter the, "prayer space" till the boy has taken a bath. Like a spoilt brat Murad answers, "This is the 21st century and you still believe such nonsense" (FM,461). The cultural crisis that is overtaking our urban society is clearly visible in the novel. Mistry makes an effort to highlight the tradition of the Parsis. After returning from the hospital, Nariman is shocked by the absence of the silver tray:

Tradition ("our cultural heritage") is self-evidently a process of deliberate continuity, yet any tradition can be shown, by analysis, to be a selection and reselection of those insignificant received and recovered elements of the past which represent not a necessary but a desired continuity (Williams 187).

Mistry makes that indifference and doubt of the major attitudes displayed by the youngsters towards religion and religious rituals. Murad does not appreciate his father's excessive reliance on fire temples because the youngsters believe in the philosophy of consumerism where religion and rituals have no place. Mistry aptly sums up the attitude of modern children in the attitude of Murad. The new generation advocating change cannot realize

the importance of many things that are being rejected by them in the name of modernity. Youngsters don't understand that man's faith in some faith or ideology remains a motivating power in him. The old generation mourns the loss of faith in their children. The hurt sentiments of the generation of parents are visible in Yezad's statement, "Our faith is a subject of ridicule for your son" (FM,461). The writer's understanding of this accelerative thrust" of change in society gets reflected in Roxana's statement: "A generation ago parents got upset because boys were keeping their hair too long. " How times change" (FM,461).

The issue of superiority of Parsi race also finds the two generations in situations that generate stress. The pride of being a 'pure Persian race' is felt and expressed by the old generation but the modern generation disparages such thoughts. When Yezad talks about the Parsis" unique contribution to this planet, Murad makes fun of his ideas and calls him a 'bigot'. The parents in Mistry's family matters always want their children to follow traditional norms and want them to get associated with the children of their own community and culture. The modern generation, on the other hand, criticize this over pressure on conventions and the difference of caste and community. The present day norms often clash with the demands of traditions in Mistry's works. "Modernity" of children is often perceived in a negative and vulgar fashion by their parents. The entire present generation is generalized as corrupt because of the influence of foreign exposure and it is tarnished with a lack of gravity in its conduct and thoughts. Parents generally brand the youngsters as free spirited individuals without any respect for tradition. With such popular gross generalizations, the parents hardly afford a chance to the new generation to blend and strike friendship with traditions.

The issue of marriage is taken up quite seriously by Mistry in his work family matters. The writer gives us a peek into the tradition bound Indian society where the major decisions of

life are taken by the family and community. This family and community oriented social structure has always been very rigid and the spirit of individualism is never promoted in it. Nariman's parents in *Family Matters* belong to this conservative structure of society where marriage is a social institution rather than an act of individual choice.

Nariman, who is a professor of English, tries to challenge the norms of strict and rigid Parsi community by falling in love with a Christian girl, Lucy. The half-articulated desire to achieve selfhood is seen in Nariman's declaration of marriage with a ,parjaat sgirl but the decision to marry outside the Parsi community is not acceptable to the parents and the community. Like most castes and communities of India, Lucy's family too is against her marriage with a non-Catholic. Despite Nariman's deep attachment to Lucy, he is compelled to marry Yasmin because his parents belong to a society bound by extremely restrictive conventions of marriage and even after a wait of eleven years, there is hardly any scope for permission for the inter-caste marriage. In Nariman's acceptance of his marriage to a woman of his own caste, is not an easy job in a traditional society. Instead of remaining a silent spectator, the members of community and caste express their hold on the individual. Mistry makes it known that in their objection to inter-faith marriage lies a concern of the Parsi parents for their community. They want to preserve the purity of their breed and that is why Inter-faith marriages are a matter of censure. Nariman's parents are shown to be educated and are in favour of love marriage but inter-faith marriage is not acceptable to them. The pressure from the community is immense and dominant. "No happiness is more lasting than the happiness that you get from fulfilling your parents" wishes. Remember that, Nariman" (FM,13), says Nargesh Aunty.

After much pressure and persuasion Nariman ultimately is made to marry Yasmin Contractor, a widow with two children. His father is congratulated by his friend, Mr. Kotwal:

“After eleven years of battle you win” (FM,12). It is made clear that Nariman is compelled by parents, relatives and the community to marry Yasmin. The scene on the day of marriage is described in these words: “ Like an invalid steered by doctors and nurses, he drifted through the process, suppressing his thoughts and misgivings, ready to believe that the traditional ways were the best” (FM,16). Nariman marry outside his caste and going against the strict rules and regulations of the community might have been a romantic gesture but it could not have been accepted as the reality of 1960s especially in Parsi community to which Nariman belongs, but he does not dare to go against his parents and community. The strangulating hold of an orthodox community is visible in Nariman’s submission to the will of his parents. In the battle between rebellious passion and the accepted social norm, the young man is pressurized to conform. Nariman’s family as his own grandson Murad is diametrically opposite his grandpa. He is least concerned about what his father says and wants.

Murad in *Family Matters* reflects that we have entered an age where the authority of the parents is no longer incontrovertible and the community has lost its hold on the individual. In such a situation, societal norms, customs and traditions, are being challenged openly by the youngsters. Murad have overhauled perceptions held by their parents regarding their role in the lives of children. The observations that “Life is not static but moving and changing” (Kettle 12) are aptly summed up in Mistry’s fiction. Mistry’s novels depict that the contradiction of thoughts between the old and new generation has acquired a grim stance in modern times. The writer reflects his understanding that in the struggle for existence in the society, the old, orthodox, unscientific, traditional mode of life is unable to mould itself according to the changing times and it does not possess the inner strength to survive, so it is bound to pass into extinction.

Disrespect is a source of great pain in Mistry's world and submission of self has generally been the quality he admires in youth. He seems to glorify the sense of duty, sacrifice, and obedience in the children and castigates their rebellious attitude towards their parents. However, his emotional involvement with the tension-ridden old generation does not make him blind to the fact that parents are generally too rigid and adamant in their thinking. They are generally hostile to change and regard everything old as gold and the new and innovative is frowned upon by them. As a consequence, tension and stress have become the new reality of urban homes. Nariman's parents in *Family Matters* consider love marriage to be better than arranged marriage, but they would not allow inter-caste marriage.

Mistry agrees with that any support of western values by the children hurts the sentiments of the parents. They want past practices and beliefs to dictate contemporary life. They want their rational and liberal children to follow the traditional rules of caste, class and community. Modern children are too independent, too bold and too unemotional to accept the orders of their parents. They feel that while they live in the 21st century, the attitudes of their parents are stubbornly orthodox, old-fashioned, out-dated and feudal. The author sketches that a trend has begun to take place where the children don't take their parents' advice and guidance in crucial matters – be it the choice of their friends, their career, their dress or their marriage, the children never ask about the likes and dislikes of their parents. For Jehangir, his name holds no fascination. He asks his father if he could change his name to John, as he loved the names in Enid Blyton and Famous Five. In reply his father says that being a Parsi he has a Persian name and he must “be proud of it, it's not to be thrown out like an old shoe” (FM,247).

Generation gap is causing unbearable agony and anguish for the parents, Mistry strongly recommends that the parents should try to understand the point of view of their children. For the

future to be better parents need to reject what no longer works and they should try to develop a somewhat practical approach towards life so that harmony in relationships remains maintained. This understanding is reflected in Roxana's attitude when she tells Yezad, "Next week he'll be eighteen complete, nineteen running. How long can we treat him like a boy?" (FM,486).

Well-known sociologist Yogendra Singh opines that: "Strains in the authority pattern of the family do arise on account of the younger generations" urge for freedom" (Singh 183), and this fact is easily observed in Mistry's fiction Mistry seems to suggest is that home is the perfect location where friendship between tradition and modernity can seep into an individual. Taking the initiative to make peace, to drive sense through dialogue is much better than accusing the children and grieving over the consequences of serious rift.

The two generations will have to proactively debate on various burning issues where traditional thinking is at loggerheads with the modern sensibilities. It is more than evident that the structure of relationships has undergone a change and the transformation in the attitude of the new generation is ensuring that clashes with the traditional structural order and thought pattern are bound to occur in future. However, Mistry is hopeful that through debates and discussions between generations, a mature, consensual understanding can be sought on important issues. Mistry emphasizes the relevance of respect for tradition along with acceptance of modernity. The traditional wisdom of ages should be respected and modernity should also be welcomed. The writer seems to suggest that the need to develop understanding between tradition and modernity is paramount and it will be in the interest of individual, society and the entire nation.

Mistry's fiction shows that conflict between 96 generations is extra-ordinarily commonplace and a universal phenomenon. The young generation reflects the tendencies of a freedom and feels that questioning the decisions of parents is entirely reasonable. The novel

reveals how the rigidity of the parents spoils Nariman's life and how Jal, Coomey, Lucy and Yasmin also suffer because of the stubborn decision of the parents. Had there been an effort to understand Nariman's sentiment, life would not have been tragic for the whole family. It is regrettable that Nariman's parents remain adamant and it does not occur to them that they will ruin many lives by their rigid behaviour.

The writer shows that the orthodox attitude of the parents can ruin the lives of their own children. In the very opening chapter of *Family Matters* when Coomey becomes dictatorial, Nariman is not able to control his emotions and says, "In my youth, my parents, controlled me and destroyed those years. Thanks to them, I married your mother and wrecked my middle years. Now you want to torment my old age. I won't allow it" (FM,7). These words spoken by Nariman make it evident that Nariman holds his parent's decision responsible for the tragedy of his life. The statement made by Nargesh aunty that by leaving Lucy, Nariman will make his parents happy and will also get happiness for himself proves totally wrong in the light of the fact that Nariman's acceptance of the decision of his parents proves disastrous. Till his dying day he wonders what he has let himself in by marrying Yasmin Contractor. He thinks that she had taken the step of marrying him for the security for her children. And he, when he looks back on it all, across the "wasteland" of their lives, despairs at how he could have been so "feeble-minded" to have allowed it to happen. Even after a long period of 36 years, Nariman feels that they had been ground down by their families. Time and again, Nariman blames himself for his "first mistake". *Family Matters*, thus, shows that the writer does not approve of the lack of flexibility in the attitude of the parents.

Family Matters as a novel that shares with the loss as well as the subsequent struggle for meaning of life. Here Mistry examines matters of religious struggles that are part of his larger

concerns about his Parsi tradition. The religious components of identity are particularly important for Parsi characters. However, the main concern for this vulnerable community in “Family Matters” centers the merits and notion’s ethnic purity.

Burning fire at the temple offers subtle past and present connection of Parsis. In a way, the fire-temple replaces the family home as a place of safety from the outside world. Parsi community faces a real human tragedy and it is portrayed with great sensitivity in the novel.

The title suggests that family is important both as the site of primary loyalties and often unresolved issues. In the novel, family comes to have both positive and negative connotations.

The title’s obvious double entendre speaks not only of the duties and responsibilities, the matter of a family’s workings, but also of how much family matters to us. The novel is a memory of moving into the past and the element of nostalgia sharply coming on the surface. It also highlights the sense of belongingness and the crisis of up rootedness:

Man is invested from birth with certain...essence. It is as it were the nucleus of his personality, his ego. The only question is - which determines which? Is man formed by life or does he, if he has a strong enough personality, shape life around him...because he has something against which to measure himself. Because he can look at an image of perfection, which in rare moments manifests itself to his inward ego (Solzhenitsyn 312).

Mistry has established himself as one of the prominent writers of the post colonialist writing movement and won many critical claims. Although he has been living in Toronto, Canada since 1975 but even now he sets his novels in his native city Bombay. He presents the realities of life combining a natural, direct style with a simple description to present an honest and loving image of India.

At last we can say that Rohinton Mistry's family matters are totally about family matters, according to up-to-the-minute times. There are many scenes in the novel, which highlights the suffering of the Nariman, which presents the reality of human life.

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