Family Matters- An Amalgamation of Familial, Socio-Economic and Religious Ideologies

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to focus on a brilliant novel Family Matters from one of the finest living novelists Rohinton Mistry and his writings on familial, social and economic set up of modern urban in India. He elevates his readers through his copious and vivid descriptions and makes them feel and experience as they live in Bombay with his characters. He projects how people lead life in modern India and how they sometimes find problems in balancing their culture and the practical difficult issues. The tradition and modernity become binary opposite to the characters in the novel. The religious discourse alters the functional activity of life of Nariman. The mechanics of life and schedule get modified by ailments and economic status of Man. Mistry also brings forth the political environment and its vital role in present scenario.

Keywords

Life, reality, modernity, culture, ailment, sufferings

Indian Writing in English grows profoundly with variety and maturity of thoughts and arises interest both in India and abroad. Indian Fiction in English posits intellectual and literary gestation. Rohinton Mistry one of the great writers explores the new arena fusing tradition and modernity for the writing of fiction in recent years. Mistry a diaspora born in 1952 in Bombay, India, studied Mathematics at the University of Bombay, graduating in 1974 immigrated to Canada, where he worked as a bank clerk in Toronto, while studying English and philosophy at the University of Toronto In 1983. He started his literary venture at the relatively late age of 31, by writing short stories. He has authoured a collection of short stories titled Tales from Fironsha Baag in 1987 which was followed by A Fine Balance (1996) Such A Long Journey and Family Matters (2002) and were shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Mistry has been awarded several distinguished awards.
Mistry portrays the lives of common people in Post-Independent India, the novel *Family Matters* captures the socio-political turmoil of this era. He attempts to depict the reality of India. Mistry deals the fact of Postcolonial India and the plight of the common men. The writer shows Bombay as oppressive and overcrowded metropolitan city and succeeds in presenting the Parsi community. The culture, customs and traditions of the Parsi people is presented to the readers. Mistry’s presentation of India in the novel is unique and distinct. His instincts in showing his country with fresh Perspectives throw open to many discourses. The novel *Family Matters* reveals the life of an Indian urban family coping with events that take place around them. The family of Nariman includes his daughter and her husband, Roxana and Yezad Cheney, their two sons Murad and Jeganhir and Nariman’s step children Jal and Coomy who live in Bombay at the opening of the novel. Nariman a seventy nine year old Parsi widower suffers from Parkinson’s disease and with his past memories lives with his two middle-aged step children in a large flat known as Chateau Felicity. This is the place where Nariman lived with his wife Yasmin who died some years earlier to the beginning of the story.

When the novel begins Nariman’s step children are preparing to celebrate his 79th birthday. His daughter Roxana and her family are also expected on this occasion. His step children are always worried about Nariman’s practice of going for a walk alone in the evening. They are afraid that he may hurt himself. To make this true he comes home with a wound from a fall in a ditch. But they are not able to get him stay at home from his evening walk.

After his birthday celebration he has another fall on his walk but he breaks his ankle this time. He has been taken to Parsi General Hospital where Dr. Tarapore treats him. He returns to Chateau Felicity in a bad condition since he cannot move around him, it is difficult for his step children Coomy and Jal to look after him. Coomy complains louder and louder as she cleans her step father’s excretions. They decide to shift Nariman over to Roxana. Nariman accepts the move only after getting approval from Roxana whereas she has not been informed about her father’s accident and his arrival to her house.

Roxana takes her father in, though they live in a tiny flat. She expects that he can be shifted again to Chateau Felicity within three weeks of time. The boys in the Pleasant villa are delighted to have their grandfather there. They even try to take care of him at their level best.

Money becomes major worry to them. Yezad, who is an honoured employee in Bombay Sports Goods Emporium, is not paid well. He tries in various ways to improve his family budget envelopes. He even tries Matka but he loses his money in the game. His boss Kapur wishes to nominate his name for the forth coming election but his wife controls him from doing so. Yezad works up a plan to getting his boss back on his track but his plan works out very badly and his owner is killed in the course of it unfortunately. The owner’s widow treats Yezad in a bad way as testing his honesty. The loyal worker Yezad is got insulted by her behavior. Later she closes the store without informing Yezad. So Yezad is left away jobless. Coomy fears that her step father may return to their house. So she knocks down the plaster ceiling in Chateau Felicity.
house to make it unlivable. But a terrible accident occurs when a handyman neighbour and Coomy are working on the ceiling. A heavy beam slides off and kills both Coomy and the handyman who is living with his wife happily near their flat. After Coomy’s death, Jal convinces Roxana and Yezad to sell the Pleasant villa and asks them to stay with him in Chateau Felicity. They too accept his proposal. An Epilogue of this novel makes the readers understand where Nariman is no more after five years but still problems are going on among the family members.

Family Matters has all the richness in it. The writer can be praised for his ability of presenting a real perspective on his own country and people with myriad life style. His characters live in a dark and troubled mood to lead even an ordinary life. His depiction of life is an interesting picture. The real environment is shown in remarkable clarity. He compares his city Bombay with Shakespeare as: “Shakespeare is like Bombay. In them both, you can find whatever you need - they contain the universe” (303). He also glorifies the historical facts of Bombay and also shows his disillusion about politics.

The Economic problem becomes an important criterion in middle class families when their budget envelopes become insufficient. There arise quarrel even among the family members due to over expenses. Because of this Nariman an old aged man becomes a burden to his step children and they do not want to take care of him. His arrival to his daughter’s house shows the situation thread bare to the readers and helps the readers to understand that how physical ailment worsen the situations at home.

The culture demands the unity between a husband and a wife but economic status of a man finds it difficult to sail them safe. They tore between culture and practical difficulties. Fortunately the well knotted relationship with children helps both the husband and wife lead a peaceful life. Impact of the memories of the past and the childhood life always exists since time immemorial. Nariman also thinks Lucy, his lady love for ever even at his death bed, and their marriage is denied because of religious and ethnic divisions which often occur in Indian families. Mistry graciously pictures it. And vividly portrays how for the ethnical force enslaves the small minds even in their playing games. Jehangir and Murad are used well to expose his views. Vilas, friend of Yezad who helps the poor and illiterate by writing letter for them, comes to know that how a boy suffers when he falls in love with a higher cast girl. Mistry visualizes the caste system in many ways in the novel and shows his outrage towards it.

Miss Helen Alvarez, a teacher, is always pine for a society without corruption. She teaches the need of the honesty to her students and tries to prepare good leaders by appointing the home work monitors. She believes good citizens of a classroom will be the good citizens of India. She believes young minds can make a society where there is no bribe. Mistry says the present as the culture of crookedness with full of crooked business, and bribes. Even the pass time becomes Earn time as match-fixers break the game loving hearts.
Mistry does not forget to explore political issues. Mr. Kapur owner of Yezad, has excellent plans to propagate his vision of future Bombay. Through him Mistry exhibits the Political situation of present day India.

The writer’s intensity is also to exhibit the public places of Bombay, travel and sufferings of the day to day life. But he uses his letters with spirited humour to show the human sympathy and their eager ponderings of life.

Mistry does not fail to capture the cultural and moral values. At modern scenario, neglecting the aged has become a usual deed. Motivating the youngsters in taking part of caring for the old is a spectacular thought of the writer. He gives a prominent place for respecting the old in this novel. He illustrates clearly the life of old and young. The whole novel moves with the old man Nariman. The writer probes Nariman’s past and reveals his old age sufferings. He enriches it while Jehangir and Murad help their grandfather when he is in need. It gives strong impulsive emotion to the readers.

He creates vivid picturesque effect in the novel and it has boundless illustration. It is entirely direct and clear. He highlights the importance of work and also goes straight towards nature and reproduces it forcefully. He condemns the rapid commercial and material changes. The outstanding quality of his writing paints Bombay and he gives a concrete living image of urban life. He brings forth the truth which lies at the heart of all the human beings with special richness. This novel is harmonious, convincing and clear in presenting life and its significance.

Works Cited


