

Different Types of Women's In Rohinton Mistry's "Family Matters"

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ABSTRACT

Rohinton Mistry is an award winning fiction writer living in Canada. All his works have received unanimous praise. Though he is a diasporic writer, he concentrates much on the problems of Bombay Persians. He has given much importance to family relationships. Woman plays the major role in a family. Father is the source of income whereas mother plans to spend it carefully. The happiness of the family is partly in the hands of father and partly on mother. Mistry has highlighted how the family grows and destroys by women, through his fiction Family Matters. I am going to concentrate on different types of women handled by the novelist in Family Matters, in and around the family and their roles in the society.

He was born on 3rd July 1952, is an Indian-born Canadian who writes in English. Mistry is of Indian origin, originally from Mumbai, and currently resides in Brampton, Ontario, Canada. He practices Zoroastrianism and belongs to the Parsi community. Mistry is a Neustadt International Prize for Literature laureate (2012). He wrote novels, short stories and chapbooks. His third novel "Family Matters" is a consideration of the difficulties that come with ageing, which Mistry returned to in 2008 with the short fiction *The Scream* (Published as a separate volume, in support of World Literacy of Canada, with illustrations by Tony Urquhart). 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.

INTRODUCTION

Woman is a symbol of love – this is the universal thought: that's why everything is named after women: the rivers of our country, mother tongue, mother land etc... woman means

dedication, sincere, caring and loving. Charity begins at home. But my question is, are all the women in this world loving or caring or dedicated? Rohinton Mistry in his novel *Family Matters* has given the answer for this question. All the fingers in the hand are not same likewise all the women in this world cannot be same. Educated or uneducated, their behavior range according to their environment. Mistry dealt with Bombay Persians in his novel. Persian men and women are well educated and well mannered. Among these educated and mannered women, Mistry has portrayed different types of women such as nurturer, bully, spiteful, timid and independent. Coomy, Roxana, Jeroo, Yasmin, Lucy, Phoola, Villi, the Card Master, Mrs. Kapur and Daisy are some of the women characters in this novel who are different from each other.

Nurturer is a person who nurtures. Nurturing is being very caring and loving someone. Commonly mothers are referred as nurturers. Nurturing is the act of encouraging, nourishing and caring for someone. Roxana and Jeroo come under this category. They both love their family and are very careful in the unity of the family members. The whole story of *Family Matters* is centered on Nariman Vakeel. When Nariman falls in love with the non-Parsi girl, Jeroo tries her best to divert Nariman. She arranged a get together, so that all her family members and relatives may give suggestion about the importance of marrying a girl from their own community. Finally she succeeded by arranging marriage for Nariman to a Parsi girl, Yasmin, the contractor.

The book opens with Nariman's accident as a result of which he is bedridden. He suffers humiliation due to deterioration in his health and the grudging care (bedpans, sponge baths, etc.) of his two step-children especially Coomy his step-daughter who has never accepted him or any of his efforts to be a father. The poor man is entirely at their mercy and they are uncomfortable with the burden of caring for him. Coomy in a fit of inspiration born of a desperate desire to not suffer this burden any longer creates with Jal grudging assistance the perfect reason as to why they can no longer nurse him. In this way, they shift the burden on to their younger sister Roxana who is married with two young sons. She lives in a tiny apartment with less than half the space as that of the flat that Coomy and Jal share. Roxana is fond of her father but her household's resources are stretched to the limit with the cost of nursing him.

Roxana is a selfless woman who lives in a small flat with her husband and two children. Her world is nothing but her family. Roxana is very careful in maintaining the economy of the family. Though her husband earns low, she manages to run her family happily. She also wants to know very often whether her family members are happy and satisfied. She often asked daddy, Are you happy? Yezad, is everything okay? This question Mummy asked Murad and him too,

she wanted happiness for all of them, needed to check it constantly. (92) She has brought up her family members in well-mannered and disciplined way. Her kids are also very adjustable and they always answered 'yes' even though they are not happy. When Nariman fall sick, she readily accepts to take care of her father though there is no enough space in her house or money. She shares the responsibility of her half-sister Coomy. Roxana, who lives a contented life with Yezad and her two children (Murad and Jehangir) in a small flat at Pleasant Villa takes up the care of Nariman like a dutiful daughter, but the inclusion of a new member in an already stuffed house soon becomes evidently painful both physically and emotionally for Roxana's family. As loathing for Nariman's sickness increases and finances of the already strained household go burst, inundated by the ever increasing financial worries, Yezad pushes himself into a scheme of deception involving Vikram Kapur (his eccentric and sometimes exasperating employer at Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium). Two terrible incidents occur, which turn the plot and the lives of the characters topsy-turvy.

Her older son and her husband resent the intrusion. Her younger son assists her as much as he can. He and his mother are the only ones who help Nariman keep his humanity. As Yezad comes to centre stage for the following part of the book, the author explores the problems faced by an average middle-class family. Financial problems lure him and Jehangir towards greed and money. The subplot of the book, which involves Yezad hatching a plan to cheat his employer of a large sum in order to meet his growing expenses by making up a Shiv Sainik threat. This subplot acts as the turning point in the main story. The book contains many details of the Parsis' practices, rituals, intolerances, and the concerns of native Parsis. In the epilogue, the youngest of all characters, Jehangir, becomes the narrator, describing the metamorphosis that religion, age, death, and wealth bring to his family. Coomy is now dead. Roxanna's family now lives with Jal. A full time nurse has been hired for Nariman and Roxanna feels guilty about it since her father now has bedsores - a sign of lack of care. Yezad has undergone a sea change from an atheist to a fanatic.

Some women feel shy and timid when they move with other people. There are strengths and weaknesses in being shy. They will be cautious thinkers. They will think a lot before doing anything. Also they are easily approachable. They appear to be innocent and good to others and believable. At the same time they will be very stubborn and strong in their decision. Lucy, Nariman's girlfriend, a non-Parsi girl appears to be a shy and stubborn girl. Nariman loves Lucy but was forced to marry Yasmin. But Lucy follows Nariman even after his marriage. She discontinues her studies and decides to work as a helper in the same apartment where Nariman

lives. “ she had abandoned her M.A., she did not have a job, and was still living at the ‘YWCA’. (65) Nariman requested her to return to her native place and not to come to visit him. But Lucy rejects his plea and comes every day. She is mentally disturbed because of her love and finally meets death. Being shy she does not know any other way to express her love, at the same time she is not able to leave Nariman. But her decision not to leave him at any instance clearly shows how stern she was in her decision. She has been insulted by Nariman’s wife and others for this act. Even then Lucy is very stern in her decision.

Some women are rude and bully by nature. Bully refers to being forceful, dominate and aggressive to others. Bullying can be emotional, verbal, physical or cyber. Force by any of these four categories, affects others strongly. Coomy, the step-daughter of Nariman, Yasmin, the second wife of Nariman and Mrs. Kapur, the owner of Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium are portrayed as rude and bully characters in this novel. Nariman marries Yasmin, who is a widow with two children, Jal and Coomy. So it is from the earlier time until the end Coomy behaves rude to her step-father. She always put forth too many rules and regulations to be followed. Being an old man, affected by Parkinson disease expects some sort of affection and love from his children but Nariman gets complete unbelongingness from Coomy. When Jal requests Coomy to be lovable to Nariman, Coomy frankly admits “ I was already eleven years old when he became our step father. It was not like a baby growing up with her real father”. (64) Coomy feels that Nariman is responsible for her mother’s death. So she is not able to stop her hate even at his olden days.

Nariman after marrying Yasmin, tries to be normal with his step children. Though he spends his time and money for them, he fails to earn their love. He compares Coomy with her mother Yasmin. “Like mother, like daughter, he thought reminded of the time when Yasmin had deprived him of his pyjamas. His pyjamas and lot more”. (64) When Nariman broke his ankle Jal and Coomy finds more difficult to take care of him. Coomy is more frustrated and feels burden to nurse her father. Even the servant maid Phoola refuses to clean the house because of the bad smell from Nariman’s rooms. She informs Coomy that she won’t be coming to clean the house from the very Next day and demands her salary. “Just give me my salary, I will leave now. There is lots of work available in other houses without a smell that turns my nose into a sewer”. (76) Coomy is upset and much irritated. As the maid left, she has to do all the house hold works and also has to take care of her father too. For her, everyday ends with chaos. When situation becomes worse Jal and Coomy want to take a decision. They sat couple of days to take some

action but nothing works. They plan to appoint an ayah but their economic status does not leave them to have one.

There were back where they started, hurt and angry, their reasoning clouded by fatigue and frustration as they gazed over the balcony railing at the never-ending streams of traffic... But I can't help hating him. (82) It is Coomy, who forces in leaving Nariman in his daughter's house. Knowing very well that Roxana lives in a very small flat with little income heartlessly she leaves him there. Unaffectionately she talks about Roxana to Nariman she says, "Your own flesh and blood, not like Jal and me, second class". (7) Coomy has that much hate in her heart. Family Matters weaves the lives and memories of a Parsi family. The novelist has succeeded in maintaining a fine balance between death and bigotry, family nurture and control. Mistry has explained different women characters in a single novel as caring, loving, rude, shy and independent. Though all the women characters are not highlighted in the novel, each character plays an important part for the main story. When we read and reread this novel, we can do deep analysis of different women characters

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