

THE ART OF PARENTING AS OBSERVED IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S *FAMILY MATTERS*

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Abstract:

Rohinton Mistry is an Indian born Canadian writer who captures the complexities of life with his beautiful cohesion of words and phrases. His concern for familial ties and the truthful interaction between parents and children channels the future of India as families are the building blocks of any given society. The art of parenting plays a crucial role in the psychological and physical development of a child. Rohinton Mistry's fiction is not far from reality and one could easily connect with the narrator's world of events without even knowing it. *Family Matters* captures the innocence and the creative space of children adjacent to the adult world of parents who constantly admires, cherishes and motivates the growth of children in every progressive phases. This paper will bring out the bond shared by parents with their children in this phenomenal novel by Rohinton Mistry.

Key Words: Parents, children, memories, love, care, attention, old age, sacrifice.

"I'm truly blessed to have such a family. Makes up for all other deficiencies" (FM, 12)

Family Matters revolves around the domestic sphere of Nariman Vakeel's family. Nariman a seventy-nine old man suffers from Osteoporosis, Parkinson's, hypotension and broken angle and his two step children – Coomy Contractor and Jal Contractor decide to leave him in their sister Roxana's little apartment . She lives with her husband Yezad and two sons in Pleasant Villa. Nariman became a child in his daughter's hand. The novelist describes the love of a daughter when she soothes his pain without shrinking her face on the foul smell that emanated from his bed sores,

"Roxana crumpled the sudra to wipe the sweat from her father's back and armpits. She shook powder from the tin and rubbed briskly, again lamenting the lack of water. Then she fished a clean sudra and shirt from the jumble in the suitcase and helped him into them.

"Thank you. I feel fresh as a daisy." (FM, 112)

Jehangir is Roxana's seven-year-old younger son and he feels happy in feeding his grandfather. Roxana "understood the meaning of it all, of birth and life and death. My son, she thought, my father, and the food I cooked... A lump came to her throat; she swallowed" (FM,113). Their happiness didn't last long when they learnt that Jal and Coomy had in fact dumped their father and would not give them the pension amount to cover Nariman's medical expenses. The family starts to fall short in all the supplements including food and medicine as Yezad's earning was not sufficient to run a family of five.

One could learn that love will find its roots even in the draught. Murad walked for miles from school and saved little money to buy a present for Jehangir. The family suffered a lot of hardship and Murad observed a long-lasting sadness in his brother as the fight between Roxana and Yezad loomed large after Nariman entered their household. When Murad tried to secretly slip in the present on Christmas night, he was caught red-handed by Yezad who was over-whelmed by Murad's loving gesture towards his brother,

"He wanted to hug him, hug them both, tell them he loved them beyond measure, tell them how fortunate he was to have them for his sons, and how blessed they were to be brothers who cared about each other, and he wished their caring would never end, they would look out for each other all their lives." (FM,374)

Jehangir in his attempt to understand the sufferings of his parents, thinks of helping them in the way that he could. Being a homework monitor, he became an easy prey to three rich boys who thrust twenty rupees each to make up for their incomplete homework. When Miss. Alverz found that her golden boy Jehangir did an unforgivable mistake of taking bribes she wrote to his parents. Yezad was upset on hearing what had happened in school, he didn't slap nor scold and that left him horrible. Jehangir realized that Yezad would burst out on Roxana "To listen to them hurt each other because of what he had done was going to be his punishment." (FM,282). Yezad starting blaming himself for not earning enough to provide for the family and providing for Nariman became a chief concern as they were running short of everything after Nariman came to their villa.

Yezad was very strict in not letting the boys to touch Nariman's bedpan. When Roxana went out, Nariman was badly in need of a bedpan and the boys hesitated because of the angry look that Yezad gave them. Fortunately, Roxana returned on right time to help her father relieve. She became furious for not helping her father, she says that he should try to remember the teachings of Gandhiji, that "there was nothing nobler than the service of the weak, the old and the unfortunate" (FM,286).

Roxana felt it as a blessing for her sons to grow up with their grandfather. She adds that "...be glad our children can learn about old age, about caring- it will prepare them for life, make them better human beings" (FM, 282). Yezad could not agree with her philosophy, for sickness

and dying is a thing of the old and they must think only about fun and happiness when young. Roxana retorts as follows,

“No time like the present. It’s a chance to practice kindness every day, like Daisy practises her violin. If they learn kindness, happiness will follow. And one day, when we are old and helpless, they’ll not turn their backs on us” (FM, 286).

One could find that Yezad had a change of heart in the end for the narrator describes him clipping off the nails and giving Nariman a haircut. Rohinton Mistry gives the reflective thoughts of Yezad while observing the groans of his father-in-law in bed, for he began to understand the deeper meaning of Roxana’s philosophy of life,

“What folly made young people, even those in middle age, think they were immortal? How much better, their lives, if they could remember the end... But in the end all human beings became candidates for compassion, all of us, without exception...” (FM, 358).

Children are the greatest blessings for parents and vice-versa. Rohinton Mistry depicts the awe of every parent in watching their children grow. Yezad kissed their children goodbye when they got ready to leave for school. On returning to the dinning table, he was amazed at their development, “Growing up so fast. Seemed like yesterday Murad was starting kindergarten and Jehangir was crawling in diapers. And look at them now. To think he had created them, he and Roxie, these two beautiful sons of theirs” (FM, 290).

Rohinton Mistry’s realistic depiction of an everyday home makes the readers reminisce upon their childhood or their children’s childhood and this novel drives home the lesson that children imitate their parents and they are very sensitive about what happens around their home. The input that they get, will be reflected tomorrow when their parent’s grow old.

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