

Old Age and Parsi Minority in “Family Matters”

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Abstract

Old age care is an emerging challenge in India. Old age responsibility is a grim reality and anxiety for minority community like Parsi. The excessive urban thoughts give rise to the problems of nation. They have their own mindset about their life. However, there is also a fact that due to high rate of properties in Bombay where most of the Parsi families live. Social atmosphere that remains most of the members unmarried. Adult unmarried children in Parsi community compel to live with their parents, and when they get married, they live away to make their separate home.

Keywords: Disabled, responsibility, caring, alienation, sickness, hypertension, sickness.

Mistry’s novel “*Family Matters*” deals with the most important issues of Parsi community that is old age care. which is the serious matter for nation. In this novel Nariman Vakeel, in the age of seventy-nine-year-old, a Parsi widower and the protagonist lives in large apartment in chateau felicity which was once elegant. The apartment is now more or less, dilapidated condition. Nariman was dwelling there with his adult step children, Coomy and Jal. Roxana is one natural daughter of Nariman who is busy in her married life with husband Yezad and their two children Murad and Jahangir. No one able to take care of Nariman in his old age. There are very less young and able children in Parsi community to take care for their old and disable parents.

Hence the burden caring the parents is falls on the younger generations or unmarried youngsters, who refused their duty and wants to live a free life. The exact condition is falls upon the Nariman where he becomes the burden of his step children who live with him. Coomy is very indignantly blame her step-sister Roxana run away from parents care duty and force her married sister to taking care of her father. The character of Jahangir a nine-year-old boy of Roxana and Yezad has a great concern about his grandfather Nariman. Jahangir is often seen with his attempt to set a jigsaw puzzle. Jahangir make the reader visible how he try to solve the baffling of his own family politics through his jigsaw puzzle which we see several time a boy tries to lift together in the novel and wanted to puzzle out the quarrels of his family and take care of his grandpa (Nariman) who passes through the tough period of his life his old age.

With all drawbacks of an old age, wrapped by ill health, Nariman still willing to go for his daily walk. His step – children both discard this wish in order to his safety; as much for any nuisance it would bring them.

“Even with my healthy legs, Papa, walking is a hazard.” Said Jal, continuing the daily fun over his step father’s outing. “And lawlessness is the one certainly in the streets of Bombay. Easier to find of gold nugget on the footpath than a told of courtesy. How can you take any pleasure in a walk?” (FM-3)

Coomy and Jal sensed possible dangers come upon their stepfathers presented as reality with him. while returning home with a tiny hobble and scratches on his elbow. This clarify that he had stumble on some element and hurt his ankle while crossing the lane outside chateau felicity. Nariman’s hang back

for evening walk put him in real trouble. With the saints having let up after pouring relentlessly for the last fifteen days, Nariman had fallen in a trench dug up by the telephone company. The fall took him down up in the bed with broken ankle, encased in plaster of Paris cast right down from his thigh to the ankle. He paid for the delight of walking on the road of Bombay.

Without the help of his stepchildren Nariman did not carry out the smoother things of his life. He wishes to go for evening walks in spite of the several medical problems. He denied to be cowed down by Coomy's continuous instructions and Jal's extended fear of walking regarding dangers of the streets of Bombay. He retort's angrily: "In my youth, my parents controlled me and destroyed those days. 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)

Nariman has to fed up with Coomy's dominated nature and restrictions over things. She has laid down rules for nearly everything in the house. He has to announces his intention to use the W.C. He is not allowed to lock door. On the occasions that he forgets the rules. He has to put up with a lot of ragging from Coomy. He is happy only when Roxana came to visits with her family. He therefore excitedly anticipates the happy meeting on his birthday, and is naturally sorry to see them go.

The sad look of loneliness returned to Nariman's face, as Jal fetched the raincoats and umbrellas from the bathroom. Securing than front door against the night, Coomy said that each time the Chenoy family visited, she felt exhausted, as though a whirlwind or a van olio had passed through.

Nariman besotted with old age problem matters by accidentally falling into a trench; He now has to completely depend on Coomy and Jal for everything. They try to make thing comfortable for him, yet Coomy cannot keep the resentment out of her voice and actions sometimes. The doctors had emphasized the point that Nariman was to be on complete bed rest, with no strain on his ankle. The first mistake Coomy makes is to buy a commode for him.

Jal and Coomy have a tough time putting their stepfather on commode and taking him off. His ankle gets terribly hurt in the process. Nariman feels very helpless and cries quietly at night. His stepchildren also cannot bear the brunt of the labour any more. Coomy argues with Jal that since Nariman didn't have to change her diaper as a child, she too isn't obliged to clean his bum and that it should actually be done by Roxana, his own blood, not like Jal and me, second class." (FM-7) Jal as usual lets himself be convinced by Coomy and they prepare to literally dump Nariman into Roxana's house, without notice, unceremoniously.

Roxana proceeds with the day's work and at this juncture the tranquillity of the morning is broken with the unheralded arrival of Nariman on a stretcher, brought in an ambulance by Coomy and Jal. Roxana tries her best to persuade Coomy that looking after their old father in his present condition in her small flat would be next to impossible. But, Coomy does not relent; sort of emotionally blackmails her and departs with Jal leaving Nariman with his suitcase, medicine and bedpan with Roxana. She tries to make the most of the situation, makes her father comfortable on the settee, changes his clothes and serves lunch to her son and father. Jahangir is overjoyed to see his grandfather and wants to feel him. They allow him to do so after he has finished his own plate. Watching the scene from the balcony, Roxana is overwhelmed.

This is very touching portrayal of a scene immensely valuable in depicting human relationship. There are the moments Nariman longed for in the large flat at chateau felicity, where he silently wept at night feeling the rejection of his stepchildren. In the constrained space of the tiny flat at Roxana he gets all the love and attention he could have wish for. He gets the feeling of being loved, and wanted the scene of belonging to a family. Yezad is angry with Coomy and Jal for behaviour abominably, for thoughtlessly

pushing Nariman out of his own flat and advice Nariman to put his foot down. To this Nariman replies as the mouthpiece of Mistry; “If I could put my foot down, everything would be fine”. Said Nariman with a wry smile. “How can you force people? Can caring and concern be made compulsory? Either it resides in the heart or nowhere.” (FM-121)

Through the various problems faced by the Chenoy family in looking after ailing Nariman issue close to Mistry’s heart are discussed in detail. Roxana is happy for the exposure for sons are getting in caring for the aged. The young Jahangir, sleeping besides his grandfather in their small flat, is quick to hold his hand and comfort him when the latter has nightmares. Yezad, too, with his initial revulsion in handling Nariman’s bedpan, and forbidding his sons from doing it as well, display a massive shift in attitude. On an occasion when Roxana is not present in the house, Yezad surprise his sons by deciding to give the bedpan to Nariman who needs to do number two. Between father and sons, they have and left and somehow manage successfully. Roxana returns when they are on the verge of completion. She is as much astonished at touched by the sight, which meets her eyes.

The canvas of the story is centered the family of Nariman Vakeel. Through Nariman Mistry can exemplify his own reality suppressed feelings. The life of Nariman is clouded with the extreme pain, alienation, marginalized and sickness of the character. Death of his wife and his lover is the result of the ill treatment by his stepchildren Coomy and Jal who played negative role in his life. Both of them blame Nariman and consider him a sinner who never gives happiness to their mother.

Conclusion: The whole novel is presented the suffering of an old man. He is fence by the Parkinson disease, osteoporosis and hypertension. The presentation of the novel is the mental, cultural, social, regional and physical sufferings of the old protagonist and the postmodern society basically Parsi society.

Work Cited:

Primary source: Mistry, Rohinton “Family Matters” London Faber ana Faber 2002.