Rohinton Mistry’s *Family Matters* and *The Scream*, focus upon the problems of unbelongingness and preservation of family values. The novels reveal the mutual equation of family members and family politics in the post modern society. The novelist delineates the importance of belongingness and preservation of family values through the most trustworthy institution named 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. After having empathy for subalterns and minorities with a larger canvas full of the colours of Indian life, *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. No doubt, the canvas has been shrunken but the artistic and thematic aspects are not minimized in any sense. It is the consecutive 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, binds the readers and it is by his depiction that family politics permeates the novel. Mistry’s political agenda of religious politics and
Hindu- Muslim riots that rocked Bombay centres around the demolition of the Babri Masjid, in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in northern part of India by extremist Hindu organization such as Vishav Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, and the RSS while the state government stood by without taking any action and control, as it was led by the saffron party. The novel actually in various strands is the representation of the degradation of moral and ethical values in different spheres of life. It is an enthralling 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, as Nilufer Bharucha comments:

Mistry has transcended both the self and the others. The self being the persona of the writer and also his Parsi self; the being the wider world. Here all three have come together in an epiphanic moment that speaks across the national, ethnic and gender boundaries, with a voice that cannot be denied (Bhrucha 209).

*Family Matters* in many ways unearths the typicality of human nature and harsh realities of family ties in the era of growing materialism in post modern society. Mistry, the chronicler of country’s history and keen observer of human behaviour raises the universal and all time important issues in his last two novels such as old age, family ties, human relationships, death and theme of belongingness. His plot development and portrayal of characters are marvellously inter-woven although a majority of his characters are portrayed from his own tribe. Some critics allege him as an author of minority and Parsis because his literary works are full of Parsi culture and rituals. But from his approach and his concise attitude, it is clear that he has observed everything related to Parsis and their culture and traditions keenly in his childhood as his homework, so he prefers to write about these rituals and people and
the description become convincing. But his novel, *Family Matters* crosses the boundary of nation, ethnicity and times deals with the international issue of caring for our aging and dying elders. Rohinton Mistry living in Toronto for the last thirty-seven years has remained deeply rooted to his native land, India. Including *Family Matters* (2002), his three books are totally set in Bombay as he “recreates …close attention to the details of homesick exile” (Jha 155). Mistry has been described as a genius by a leading British newspaper (Jha 154) and a “true literary Map Maker” (Ondaatjee 7). Mistry himself has said that, ‘this book does not try to take on all the complexity of India as *A Fine Balance* did. It journeys inward into domestic life, just as profound a journey as far as the writing is concerned’

Nariman Vakeel, the protagonist, is a widowed patriarch of an extended family, a former Professor of English, lives with his 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. Unlike many writers of the South Asian diaspora, Mistry:

doesn’t engage in manic polemics or god-filled heights of fancy; instead his stories are careful, patient accounts of people trying to find answers in a world that seldom offers any. Reading his simple, moving
tales of struggle and affliction, you are less in the company of Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy than in the company of Victor Hugo, perhaps or Thomas Hardy (Ondaatjee 7).

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. Mistry’s all five major works prove him to be a realist, who masterfully weaves a reality that is both compelling and easy to relate. The ‘realistic’ artist “never places ‘reality’ at the origin of his discourse, but only and always, as far back as can be traced, an already written real, a prospective code, along which we discern, as far as the eye can see, only a succession of copies”(Allen 89). *Family Matters* is the story of taking care of our aging and dying elders which is a worldwide issue, the minutia of this family’s daily life is distinctly Indian. The Bombay train system, arranged marriages, unending corruption of government, religious discrimination, exploding pressure-cookers full of curry and the extremists whose goal is to abolish Valentine’s Day and attack Muslims provide the background for geographical placement of the narrative. Mistry’s desire to “fix the iterant self in a timeless and bodiless space” leads to his remembering what Edward Said Perceives as the ‘imaginative geography and history’, as “. . . reality can be composed of absurd things, the unseen blazes in our minds with a shocking vividness” (Ghose 15).

*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 deteriorating health of the
chief protagonist Nariman Vakeel, but also interrogates the remaining of Bombay, as Mumbai, the people, and the family structure. “Family Matters can be difficult, and Mistry doesn’t shy away from showing them, in all their disturbing roughness, the real truths about them” (Foray 7). 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 like state between sleeping and waking. The narrative technique adopted by Mistry is once again the flashbacks based on the time - present and time - past scheme. Mistry living in an alien land refused to give up his cultural roots, he hopes to ‘fuse’ and ‘assimilate’ himself in the new land. He reveals his Indian identity in all his five major works which prove that he does not tear away his relationship with his homeland, “. . .they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to the homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (Safran 85).

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” (3). During Narinman’s seventy-ninth birthday, he comes home with abrasions on his elbow and forearm, and a limp as he fell while crossing the lane outside Chateau Felicity. He is annoyed 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” (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 remarried. It is during his birthday, Nariman becomes nostalgic. He thinks about his past lady love, Lucy Braganza, a Goan. 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” (15).

Roxana with her husband, Yezad and their two sons, Murad and Jehangir visit Chateau Felicity to celebrate Nariman’s seventy-ninth birthday. A fine blending of pathos and humour proceed simultaneously. A humorous speech is delivered by Yezad when he says “going to fire-temple on Navroze and Khordad Sal was enough for him, and loban smoke was merely one way to get rid of mosquitoes” (25). 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 . . .” (29). It is Yezad who says that “corruption is in the air we breathe. This nation specializes in turning honest people into crooks” (31). Yezad feels that it is the BJP and Shiv Sena parties who encouraged the Hindutva extremists to destroy the Babri Mosque. Regarding Michael Jackson’s concert, Yezad says:

I’m surprised the Senapati doesn’t find him anti-anything, not even anti-good taste . . . South Indians are anti-Bombay, Valentine’s Day is anti-Hindustan, film stars born before 1947 in the Pakistani past of Punjab are traitors to the country (32).

The walls of the Chateau Felicity are decaying as it has not been whitewashed for thirty years. 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 (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). Rangarajan, the assistant to Dr. Tarapore, plastered Nariman’s left leg, is planning to emigrate for better prospects. Dr. Tarapore, student to Nariman Vakeel becomes nostalgic and remembers the lectures delivered by the Professor. The doctor recited Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel”, and he says he remembers all the stories of E.M. Forster. After meeting Nariman, the doctor feels he is successful in capturing the past moments and the ‘Ancient Mariner’ has brought back the “happiest years of my life, my years in college”(56). 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).

Jehangir is busy with his jigsaw piece, making an effort to complete his Lake Como. Roxana proves herself as a good care-taker of her family members. Working for Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium, Yezad is unsuccessful in fulfilling the daily needs of his family. Even the children are aware of their financial crisis. Music being the first love for Mistry is revealed through Daisy Ichhaporia, who plays violin. In Pleasant Villa they joked that Daisy indulged in “nude practice sessions to seduce the devil, make him appear and grant her satanic control over the instrument so she could play like a female Paganini” (100). The critical condition of the building portrayed by Mistry is symbolic. As the building is losing its colour, plaster coming out and broken drain pipes, reveal that Parsis are losing their identity and they hardly make an effort for their revival or rebirth. Mistry focuses on “the changing fortunes of the Parsi diaspora in India, when he represents both as a self-sufficient enclave community and as an integral past of the nation state” (Mehrotra 289). The building of Firozsha Baag, Khodadad Building, the flat of Dina and the Pleasant Villa Buildings resemble most of the buildings in Bombay with:

Crumbling plaster, perforated water tanks, and broken drain pipes. Its exterior, once peach in colour, now resembled the outcome of an emetic. Electrical wiring had been deteriorated, made a meal of by sewer rats. And the wrought-iron balcony railings, the building’s finest feature, were also being eaten, by corrosion (98).

With the arrival of Nariman at Pleasant Villa, Roxana reshuffles her belongings. During lunch time, Jehangir insists on feeding Grandpa. Roxana framed the scene, as “nine-year-old happily feeding seventy-nine” (113). Jehangir reads Enid Blyton to
Grandpa. A dispute breaks out between Jehangir and Murad for sleeping on the balcony as it was an adventure for them, where they could see the stars and the clouds. Yezad welcomes Nariman at Pleasant Villa. The boys are allowed to sleep in the balcony at a time for ten days each. The children stories fascinated Murad as he is hoping for heavy rain. “It will be just like the Biggles adventure when his Hurricane crash-landed in Sumatra in the middle of a storm” (122-123). Yezad visits Villie Cardmaster, or the Matka Queen, as he calls her, to lend him plastic sheets to cover the balcony. Villie Cardmaster assigns numeric values to objects and events from a dream, which is then used to play Matka. Her dream numbers often come true. Villie Cardmaster can be compared to Khorsshedbai of Tales from Firozsha Baag, whose parrot Pestonji comes in dream and reveals the future happenings. Yezad is welcomed at her residence. The past reminiscences hover when Villie comes across an old tablecloth. She shows Yezad her family photograph. Her conversation with Yezad proves her to be a reserved lady. She becomes nostalgic and pathetic when she says, “why is it that when we grow up, suddenly the happy days are behind us?” (126). Her speech reveals her agony, setback, loss and loneliness, when she says “everything is temporary. Life itself is temporary” (127). Yezad is surprised by Villie’s behaviour and the way he is treated. After meeting her, his attitude changes towards her, as Gustad Noble changed his views after meeting Miss Kutpitia in Such a Long Journey. 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 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 grandchildren to Mrs. and Mr. Arjani. The Arjani’s knew about the affair between Nariman and Lucy. Remembering about the religious controversy in which a priest had performed a Navjyot ceremony for the son of a Parsi mother and non-Parsi father. Nariman’s father condemned the priest for performing the ceremony and:

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

Unlike Such a Long Journey, Family Matters portrays strong female characters. It has active and strong characters like Roxana and Lucy. They are not passive receivers of all that is going around them; rather they are capable of changing the circumstances according to their will. As compared to Nariman, Lucy is strong and her love towards him is true. On the contrary, Nariman was a coward and who lacked the courage to
stand against his parents’ will. With the passage of time, Yasmin loses her patience. She feels that Nariman had ruined her life. “Think of yourself, how it hurts your reputation at university, and how it will affect the way people talk about our little Roxana. She will carry her father’s shame” (135).

Yezad is planning to immigrate to Canada, but later his fantasy about the new land is dissolved. He assuaged his disappointment by keeping track of problems in the land of excess and superfluity, as he calls it. He is able to distinguish between ‘here’ and ‘there’:

Unemployment, violent crime, homelessness, language laws of Quebec. Not much difference between there and here. . .we have beggars in Bombay, they have people freezing to death on Toronto streets, instead of high-and low-caste fighting, racism and police shootings; separatists in Kashmir, separatists in Quebec-why migrate from the frying pan into the fire? (137).

Since Nariman comes to stay at Pleasant Villa, Yezad had been late for work every day. Vilas Rane, salesman at the Jai Hind Book Mart, is a writer of “letters for those who couldn’t, who poured out, into his willing ear, their thoughts feelings, concerns, their very hearts, which he transformed into words upon paper” (139). Writing letters for his clients, Vilas becomes a part of their family indirectly. Yezad is proud of his wife Roxana, the way she manages the household work and cares for her father. Yezad tells her to see the hollows in her cheeks; she looks like a famine victim from Orissa. Jehangir gets acquainted to his Grandpa and they both enjoy each other’s company. Mr. Kapur, the boss of Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium, has two employees, Yezad, the manager and Husain, a peon. Working under one roof they are never discriminated. Vikram Kapur narrates how his family was forced to abandon
everything and flee from Punjab in 1947 and how they landed in Bombay. “Bombay treated us well. My father started over, again with zero, and became prosperous. Only city in the world where this is possible” (151). Mr. Kapur feels proud in calling himself Bombayvala and his love and affection for Bombay is:

Like the pure love for a beautiful woman, gratitude for her existence and devotion to her living presence. If Bombay were a creature of flesh and blood, with my blood type, Rh negative - and very often I think she is-then I would give her a transfusion down to my last drop, to save her life (152).

It seems as if Mr. Kapur carries Bombay in his heart. He collects the books about the city, old photographs, postcards, posters and news related to the city. He shows the photographs of “The Marine Lines” and the “Dhobi Talao” junction, to Yezad. He calls these photos as “beautiful Bombay’s baby pictures” (153). He regards himself lucky for having Yezad, a Parsi employee. He praises the Parsi reputation for their honesty. “And even if it’s myth-there is no myth without truth” (156). He becomes romantic when he thinks and talks about Bombay. For him Bombay is everything. He praises Bombay in his romantic tone:

This beautiful city of seven islands, this jewel by the Arabian Sea, this reclaimed land, this ocean gift transformed into ground beneath our feet, this enigma of cosmopolitanism where races and religions live side by side and cheek by jaw in peace and harmony, this diamond of diversity, this generous goddess who embraces the poor and hungry and the huddled masses, this Urbs Prima of Indis. . .(160).

Even Yezad is unable to stop the poetic flight of Mr. Kapur. To Mr. Kapur, “Bombay endures because it gives and it receives. Within this warp and wef is woven the
special texture of its social fabric, the spirit of tolerance, acceptance, generosity” (150). Mr. Kapur is worried about the dignity of Bombay which is violated by the thugs and the crooks. He feel that his “beloved Bombay is being raped” (158), and to maintain its honour, Mr. Kapur plans to participate in the municipal election. Northrop Frye’s description of the romance genre in its mythic/magical mode supplies one important answer:

The Romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream. . .the perennially child-like quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space (Frye 186).

Mr. Kapur’s romance reaches its zenith when he says “in this shop we will celebrate all festivals: Divali, Christmas, Id, Parsi Navroze, Baisakhi, Buddha Jayanti, Ganesh Chaturthi, everything” (159). In this way the Bombay Sporting Goods Emporium becomes the symbol of Sikh-Parsi-Muslim Unity. This is yet another example of ‘fusion’ and ‘assimilation’. For the humanist tradition, writes Eagleton:

meaning is something that I create, or what we create together; but how could we create meaning unless the rules which govern it were already there? However far back we push, however much we haunt for the origin of meaning we will always find a structure already in place. This structure could not have been simply the result of speech, for how were we able to speak coherently in the first place without it (Eagleton 98).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Mistry tends to be a Mythic-Realist Writer and follows both the modes as per his convenience. For the depiction of Mr. Kapur’s
obsession for Bombay in a very positive manner the writer essentially required a
mythical mode on the other hand – for a crude reality of the same Bombay city
depicted in *A Fine Balance* and later its justification in *Family Matters* an essentially
realist mode of writing was required. Yezad is annoyed to see Nariman again in
Pleasant Villa. He curses Jal and Coomy for not looking after their Pappa. Yezad
bursts in anger and says if “they kick him into our house, we find a way to kick him
back into theirs”(195). The arrival of Nariman affects Roxana’s budget and she
overcomes it by reducing her other expenses. Nariman feels guilty and compares
himself with King Lear:

> Whatever Yezad wants to say, I deserve to hear. You are suffering on account
of my short-sightedness. It was stupid of me to sign over the flat . . . to so
many classes I taught *Lear*, learning nothing myself. What kind of teacher is
that, as foolish at the end of his life as at the beginning? (196-197).

Nariman’s love for both his daughters shows his loyalty and decency towards them.
Though, he feels he made many mistakes but he never regrets them. He dumped his
agonies and sorrows within himself. Nearly each person in the family is lured by
temptation into something illegal, either gambling or bribery to make an extra rupee
or two for the family’s monthly budget. Yezad with the help of Matka Queen, Villie
Cardmaster, wins eight hundred and ten rupees in gambling. On the contrary, the
teacher’s pet and Homework Monitor, Jehangir, surprises and disgusts himself by
accepting bribes from his classmates by improving their marks and adding to his
mother’s grocery and gas funds, and Murad saves his bus fare and walks to and from
school. Every individual is making an effort to overcome the financial crisis of their
‘family matters’. The boys of St. Xavier are fascinated and most of them have lost
their hearts to their pretty and well perfumed teacher, Miss Helen Alvarez, a Goan.
Mistry, himself becomes nostalgic by describing various incidents which occurred in St. Xavier. It gives Mistry an opportunity to discuss his student life. With Miss Alvarez, the goal is to inculcate the qualities of trust, honesty, and integrity in her students. She wants her students to be good citizens of India and this is the way to fight the “backwardness and rot and corruption in the country” (217).

Mr. Kapur brings three photographs of old Bombay city and shows to Yezad. Yezad overwhelmed to see the photos. The photos revives the lost memories and Mr. Kapur feels that every individual has the same story, no matter where one goes in the world, there is only one important story, “of youth, and loss, and yearning for redemption” (228). The photographs present, the reality of the referent, and at the same moment as asserting of its pastness, and something which is in the past and is lost. The photographs present a fine blending of Mythical as well as Realistic mode of writing:

The photograph’s immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live : by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past(‘this-has-been’), the photograph suggests that it is already dead (Allen 131).

Nariman is happy to meet Daisy Ichhaporia, a violinist. He encourages Daisy, “if music be the food of love, play on, give me excess of it” (239). He asks her to promise that “when I’m dying, you’ll come to play for me” (241), to which Daisy agrees. Music plays a significant role not only in Mistry’s novels but also in Forster’s novels. According to Forster “music is the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the
arts” (Forster 117) and stating further he says “music [. . .] seems to be more real than anything, and to survive when the rest of civilization decays”(Forster 138). He observes:

Music, more than the other arts, postulates a double existence. It exists in time, and also exists outside time, instantaneously. With no philosophic training, I cannot put my belief clearly, but I can conceive myself hearing a piece as it goes by and also when it has finished. In the latter case I should hear it as an entity, as a piece of sound-architecture, not as something divisible into bars (Forster 128).

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” (247). To get rid of the voice of his inner conscience, Jehangir escapes into the Lake Como puzzle with its familiar landscape, this fascinates him as it:

Was far less complicated than his real world . . . the colours moved in gradations so subtle that the blue of the sky melted into the lake (cerulean, he remembered Grandpa’s word) and the deep dark greens could be tree foliage or part of the dense shrubbery hugging the hills.

Their reluctance to yield their secrets was their charm (287).

His inner conflict regarding the incident of bribery as well as the outer conflict regarding his ‘family matters’ made him escape into the jigsaw puzzle world to escape his tormenting conscience. The jigsaw puzzle horrifies him and he throws the piece back into the box, “it was hopeless” (288). The news of not participating in the Municipal election by Mr. Kapur shatters the dreams of Yezad. He feels his story is
“too messy to tell someone who was ultimately a stranger when it came to revealing all these family matters” (296). He contrasts himself with Villie Cardmaster, who wore lovely little pink-frock in the birthday photo, “eyes shining with innocent hope, to the woman she now was . . .” (296). Yezad is afraid if he too shall turn like her. It is Jehangir, whose intimacy with his grandfather grows powerfully. He understands his grandfather’s agonies and pain and helps him in doing soo-soo when Roxana is away. Jal’s love and affection comes forward when he withdraws five hundred rupees from the bank and that too without Coomy’s notice, and gives it to Roxana. He is fed up of listening to Coomy’s thirty-year-old anger for her stepfather. An individual living in present often relies on her/his past golden moments to overcome present agonies. When the situations go against an individual, she/he thinks of future and its shortcomings. In Mistry’s narration and story-telling, past, present and future are blended in an artistic manner. As Wesley A. Kort emphasizes the notion of time as an interflowing continuum of past, present and future:

Future time, the time of anticipation and possibility, and past time, the time of conditions and memories, have to do with present time because things future, while not yet existing, can be matters of concern in the present, and things past, while no longer existing, concern me as well in the present . . . . The past both yields to the present and conceals itself from it, and the future both withholds from the present and grants something to it . . . . In other, words, present time provides us a sense of the unity of our temporality . . . . That unity is a kind of fourth dimension of time (Kort 161-162).

Mistry becomes nostalgic towards his native land. The description of the city in a romantic manner reveals the ideal picture of Bombay’s past and present. The pressure
of Shiv Sena made it possible to change the name of Bombay to Mumbai, but in Mistry’s all four major works, Bombay remains Bombay:

The realist discourse of home relies on a long-standing conceptual structure in which two figures are balanced and constructed-as opposites: the figures of belonging and exile. The home as house (and, behind it, the home as homeland) is the site of a claim to affirmation whose incontestability has been established by a thick web of economic, Judicial and scientific discourses - which also constructs the meaning of exile. It is usually ambivalent meaning: On the one hand, exile is branded by the negatives of loss and separation; on the other, it is distinguished by distance, detachment, perspective. For the individual (and exile is decidedly individualistic figure), the poetics of exile offers a mechanism whereby suffering is exchanged for a certain moral authority (Holm 203).

It is Dr. Fitter who says “we are dying out, and Bombay is dying as well” (416). Mistry being nostalgic not only thinks about his Parsi community but also about Bombay. He is worried about their critical condition. The use of Parsi recipes dhansak, patra-ni-machhi, margi-na-farcha and lagan-nu custard reveals Mistry’s love and attachment for Parsi cousine. His writings are the source of inspiration for the Parsis and it is an indication for them to preserve their identity. In his writings the customs, traditions, rituals, language, and heritage are the sources for the coming generations to understand Parsis. In all his five works the role of culture, tradition, ritual, custom and nostalgia is so dominant that it surpasses all other aspects. Being a diasporic writer, he carries with him his historical and ancestral background along with other realities which he acquired during his stay at his birth place Bombay:
Diasporic people are those, whose ancestors disperse from one centre or more. Such people carry the memories of their homeland in their mind in terms of physical location, history etc. They experience a sense of alienation and non-acceptance in the new land. They carry the impression that their true homeland is their ancestral homeland, which they have lost, but to which their descendents should or would return finally. They feel responsible for maintaining and restoring their homeland and are aware of their ethnicity in terms of their homeland, which, remains as a physical or imaginary space in the minds of people who have been dislocated and its impressions, traces, memories of it become engraved forever (Mishra 70).

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. Nariman narrates a story to his grandsons about an evil king named Zuhaak, out of whose shoulders grew two immense serpents that had to be fed every morning with the brains of two young men. In a terrible combat the brave hero Faridoon overpowered him and tied him in huge chains. The good angel Sarosh instructed Faridoon to bury evil Zuhaak deep inside Mount Damavand, where he struggles and rages all night trying to free himself. When Zuhaak has almost succeeded in bursting his chains, the cock crows and warns the world that the Evil One will get lose in the universe. Sarosh, the good angel sends the spider to spin its web and mend the chains that Zuhaak is about to break. 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” (482). The words echo Nariman’s fathers’ days and faith and beliefs. When he caught Nariman and Lucy at his residence he shouted, “It is the kind of immorality that’s destroying the Parsi community” (268). It shows that generations never change when the responsibility comes. More or less everyone behaves in the same way. Mistry has enjoyed acclaim from critics both at home and abroad, and many place him with Salman Rushdie, although their styles are dramatically different in both form and content.

Critics have frequently focussed on the similarities and differences in the writings of these two authors. One common element in their writings is of displacement and “otherness,” as both men come from minority Indian backgrounds-
Mistry as a member of the Parsi community and Rushdie a Muslim. Whereas Rushdie's work is often surreal and cast in fantastic tones, Mistry's writing is characteristically grounded in firm, sometimes glaringly harsh realities. In a review of *A Fine Balance*, A. G. Mojtabai wrote that Mistry needs no infusion of magic realism to vivify the real. The real, through his eyes, is magical. In Mistry's characteristic style, everything—from events and places to how betel nuts are prepared— is presented in definitive and careful detail, with equally close scrutiny given to the fine minutest detail of even the most minor aspects of his characters' lives. Both Rushdie and Mistry are also part of the Indian Diaspora, a term used to describe the growing number of Indian-born authors who write about their native land from abroad. Rushdie is based in New York; Mistry writes from his home near Toronto, although he regularly travels to India while researching for his novels. As a result, the qualities of displacement are particularly manifest in the novels of both men. For Mistry, the foundation of that alien quality comes not only from his status as an immigrant to Canada, but also from being a member of a tiny, misunderstood minority within the world's second-largest country. The feeling of being left out of the cultural mainstream is uniquely reflected in the way Mistry's characters are displaced and consistently searching for a new identity, whether through migration or reinventing themselves through religious enlightenment. Critics have also examined Mistry's overt condemnation of the political forces that he believes continue to violate the rights of the downtrodden in India. Mistry reveals his special anger for the policies of Indira Gandhi and what he believes to be the reactionist politics of the Shiv Sena party. Several reviewers have pointed out that in casting his novels in some of the most turbulent periods of India's modern history; Mistry is able to highlights effectively appropriate historical facts for his own fictional needs. Mistry's short fiction has been favourably compared to such
prominent Indian writers as V. S. Naipaul and R. K. Narayan, as well as to James Joyce's seminal collection of short fiction *Dubliners*.

In *Family Matters*, Mistry weaves the lives and memories of one Parsi family into a novel of human dignity, as individuals kick against decay; the decay of flesh into death, the decay of family into death, the decay of surrounding morality, and the decay around and a head of us in time. It is written in a flawless style with a well-knit plot, the novel has “all the richness, the compassion, the gentle humour, and the narrative sweep that have earned Rohinton Mistry the highest of accolades and prizes around the world” (Flynn 7). He has succeeded in maintaining a ‘fine balance’ between scepticism and affirmation, faith and bigotry, family nurture and control, and “once again given us something absolutely painfully pleasurable, a bitter sweet rendition of life in its most ordinary intimate setting” (Thomson 6) 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 uprootedness:

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 realties of life combining a natural, direct style with a simple description to present an honest and loving image of India.

_The Scream_ is a brief fictional prose narrative dealing with theme of caring for our aging and dying elders at universal level. The short story is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. William J. Long asserts: “Behind every book is a man; behind man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environment whose influence is unconsciously reflected” (Long 2). _The Scream_ is a single story by Rohinton Mistry, of a few pages – comprising of only forty eight pages effectively and meaningfully conveys its theme and aim. However, these pages contain a deep story which not only spell binds the readers but also shows how a short story can leave a lasting impression. The book was actually printed originally in a limited edition of one hundred and fifty copies that were sold exclusively by World Literacy of Canada as a fundraiser for their organization; _The Scream_ was exquisitely produced and featured original artwork by the celebrated Canadian artist Tony Urquhart.

It is set in a Bombay apartment, is narrated by a man at the end of his life, who is angry at the behaviour of the people with those at the last stage of life, at his isolation from his family and from a world that no longer understands and care for him. He rails and raves in ways that are both hilarious and moving, and which touch the reader emotionally and draw the attention towards this sensitive and ever confronting and time les issue. This is the first trade edition of this treasure, which will retain beautiful production values as well as all of Tony Urquhart’s colourful, dynamic artwork, which was inspired by the story. This magnificent little book, having the striking issues related with the old age and moral and ethical values, is an impressive combination of fine art and literature. Through the reminiscences, the protagonist, an old man expresses his grievances and grumbling at the end of his life
on the shifting of his position in the institution of family. He recalls his status when he was young and active and used to play pivotal role in his family but he feels marginalized now. He is very angry with his family and holds the people in the “back room” responsible for his present state. He keeps up a steady tirade throughout the book that is at times deeply moving and at other times quite funny but these changes in mood creates pathos in the novel revealing the psychology of an old man. The novel seems a lively narrative of an old man’s complaints and silent protest against the misunderstanding, loss of control and restricted freedom of movement that comes with old age. It presents the strong visual image of the frustrated struggle against time and aging. The backdrop of the novel is the problems and humiliations which usually have to be faced in old age like the protagonist in the present novel who has been pushed to the front room by his own children because he has become so old, and all he does now all the day is to behold and listen to his joints creak and use typical big words (random sampling: horripilating, caliginous, hypogeian, inspissated) and then one night his sleep is broken by a scream and the old man expresses his monologue that starts with his being awakened in the night by a scream outside his window. Although the story set in India, but the narrator’s concerns are universal as he struggles with his declining abilities and his growing conviction that his family is conspiring against him. He relates how they pretend that the servant is his grandson, even letting him sit at table with them. He uses long and unfamiliar and lofty words such as caliginous, hypogeian, galimatias, sesquipedalianism - to demonstrate and prove that he still has his wits and full knowledge about him and is still smarter than his family members in backroom. Actually these demonstrations and pretensions hint at inferiority complex and loss of confidence in his personality when he feels marginalized and alienated in his own family. It is very difficult to accept for him his situation as a neglected ordinary member of the family where he has led a life as a master of his familial territory. The person, who teaches and guides his children and other family members in his familial circle, has to face ironical situation in the last
phase of his life. These types of ironical situations are depicted through the monologue of this unnamed unknown protagonist in this short novel. This kind of tragedy at the end of life provokes the old people as they recall their days of prime youth and dominant role in the family. Such an instance is mentioned in the novel when one of the members living in back room of the house try to rectify the spelling of ‘Nocturnal Micturition’ as the words are written by the protagonist.

The ones in the backroom said the spelling was wrong, that it should be a-t-i-on, not i-t-i-o-n. Their audacity is immedicable. When they were little (and I was young), they used to ask me for meanings, spellings, explanations. I inculcated the dictionary habit in them. Now they question my spelling” (12). He feels anxious and angry and feels hurt when his mistake is pointed out. Once again striking situation is highlighted by the intellectual narrator of the novel who tries to justify his superiority by the above cited assertion. This kind of situations usually occurs when a person is not ready to accept the real situation in life and he hesitates to accept that his own children can talk more intellectually than him. It is the penetrative psycho-analysis of the old men when their physical health begins to decline and memory starts to fail. Mistry himself belongs to a family where people are family centered and due to this background he understands the importance of family relations and blood ties. It is not the first literary creation in which he highlights the familial values and human relationships but he usually gives appropriate space to these kinds of relationships, human behaviour and universal human nature. Almost all his literary works are full of routine family details revealing the crucial human nature, including their greed and sacrifices for each other. The old man - narrator sees politics in every incident which occurs in day to day life. It is the result of his shaken faith in humanity and his own family that he alleges that they consciously miss his medicine because they want to dominate him. At if it is not enough, his mistrust heightens when he accuses them for their pretentious and pseudo sympathy:
And their tricks do not stop at food. Even my medicine they deprive me of, ignoring the schedule prescribed by the doctor. Then, when my hands and feet shake violently, they point to them and say, “see how sick you are? Let us take care of you. Be good, listen to what we say” (23).

The expectations from the kin become the root cause of this kind of situation. The old people’s faith starts to shake and ultimately they start to take their sympathy as mere pretensions. W.B.Yeats in his poem “Sailing to Byzantium” explains the position of old people in this materialistic world. The persona in the poem is also an old man who does not feel himself suitable for this world but his heart is laden with a lot of desires and expectations. He asserts, “Sick with desire / and fastened to a dying animal” (Yeats 21-22). The world to which Yeats wants to sail is not meant for old people. There are a lot of problems due to desires in the heart of these old people although their physical strengths have begun to decline. Sometimes these allegations seem baseless when the narrator says that not only his prescribed treatment is being overlooked but they mix diuretic in his food to accelerate his problem of urine in night. He asserts, “It would not surprise me if the others were slipping a diuretic into my food or medicine to torment me” (13). However, it is a well-known fact that decaying of health is a natural process and the problem faced by the narrator due to his age is not specific to him.

Though the novel appears about the grumblings and maltreatment of an unknown old man at the last stage of his life, and no doubt, it is the most painful phase of human life it depicts a world wide phenomenon. William Shakespeare explored the human life in seven stages among which the last one is most terrible when our body responds reluctantly:

\[
\text{Turning again toward childish treble, pipes,}\\
\text{And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,}
\]
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

(William Shakespeare *As You Like it*)

The novel represents the agony of old age which becomes physically and psychologically unfavourable and fearful because of the age-related deterioration. Then pain is precipitated by a state of non-acceptance. The old man tries to prove that he is still mentally alert and fully aware of the social behaviour. When he is thrown out into the front it is natural for him to interpret it as sheer neglect and unwantedness.

He thinks that they underestimate his wisdom and caliber and even think that he has lost memory though he is well aware about what is happening in the society that he has lost his memory. So he satirically outbursts: “No wisdom like silence” (1). Mistry through the powerful symbols and image depicts the social changes and politics and comments sharply through his minute observations, “Trishul–brandishing sadhus agitating for trade union. Vermilion-horned cows sulking, spurning the grass offerings of the devotees….Stubborn funeral pyres defying the kindling torch (14).

Such clashes of human personality are understood and analyzed by Mistry in the ending phase of life. The irony of human life is reflected through this kind of paradoxical situation as Shomit Dutta has described “the interaction of external forces and personal choices” (Dutta 3). Mistry represents human nature and mind at its most crucial time when a person needs his relations much more but usually feels alienated and ignored as does the narrator in the novel. A person works all his life to fulfill the requirements but at the last stage of life his role changes from decision maker to an unwanted fellow in the family. The language is superb, such as the narrator’s description of sleeping all together in the back room, before he was banished to the front room. The book is illustrated by Tony Urquhart using different types of paper, including the marbleized paper sometime used for endpapers of books, tempera and
gel pens. Dreamy and slightly abstract, the illustrations add depth and texture to the story. For example, illustrations with snippets of a keyboard tumbling through the air contribute to the sense of disorientation, the fear that one cannot trust reality.

As I approach a significant birthday, I find myself thinking a lot about aging, about the small gains and losses each year. I appreciate this rant, this raging against the fading of the light, more than any sweet, consolatory fairy tale. He was being taken to the hospital when his ambulance collided with a fire truck. Pronounced dead at the scene, he was taken to the morgue in a body bag. Being an organ donor, he was taken from the morgue to have his organs harvested. By the time he regained consciousness, having been told (he claimed) that it was not yet his time, the doctors had removed one of his kidneys. I found his story hard to believe and almost asked, Thomas-like, to see his scar, but his story did make me wonder about negotiating with death. With attention to the detail of his characters' everyday lives, his books often explore the tragic circumstances of India's desperate poor even as he balances this misery by presenting the dignity and joy they feel in simple pleasures and their extended families. Critics have praised Mistry's growth as a writer and his transparent style, commonly drawing comparisons with Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo. The form encourages economy of setting, concise narrative, and the omission of a complex plot; character is disclosed in action and dramatic encounter but is seldom fully developed. Despite its relatively limited scope, though, a short story is often judged by its ability to provide a “complete” or satisfying treatment of its characters and subject. Aristotle first observed:

it is not the poet’s function to describe what has actually happened, but the kinds of thing that might happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary. The difference between the historian and poet is...that one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen (Aristotle 68).
All my life I have feared mice, starvation, and loneliness. But now that loneliness has arrived, it’s not so bad. What could I do the others no longer wanted me among them, in the back room…. He is not a servant, he is our son,” they said, “don’t you recognize your own grandchild? Such liars. Such lies they tell me, to make me think I am losing my mind” (7).

In the satiric tradition, representation of vice and folly are heightened; the reader expects not a faithfully complex rendering of reality, but a selective and distorted rendition vindicated by resultant intensity and magnification of some salient features of actuality:

We are hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quite and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats’ feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

(T.S.Eliot *The Hollow Men*)

The story of the novel reflects the hollowness of human life and human wishes in this materialistic world. It is ironically revealed through the monologue and moaning of this old narrator.

Good servants are hard to find, yes. But to let him eat with them at table? Sleep in the same room, on a mahogany four-poster? And for me a mattress flung across the floor. What days have come? Kaliyug is indeed upon us. It’s a world gone arsy-versy (8).
Tony Urquhart, brightly-colored screaming faces and brightly-colored bottles of urine and brightly-colored rabies' and they kind of look like this. Matthew Arnold analysed the behavioral changes at this last stage and predicament of old age through his poem:

WHAT is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form?
The lusture of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forgo her wreath?
- Yes, but not this alone… It is - last stage of life---
When we are frozen up with in, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man?

(Mathew Arnold *Growing Old*)

*The Scream* is more whimper of the once agile, alert and intelligent narrator. The description of his condition - almost a displacement and exchange of position with a servant - would make any sensitive reader ‘scream’ - at the desirability of forming and grooming a family. What for should one spend the best days of his life? Is it worth it? Does the end justify the earlier life and all its draining responsibilities? And all this is happening in India - the land of spirituality and renunciation for others. Is the reward, outcome of selflessness selfishness and discard? Though the story in located in specific time slot, the theme outsteps the time limit as well as space boundaries and acquires the status of a universally spreading grief epidemic which if not arrested in time can become a malignant cancer eating human society from within rendering it a jungle of full of skeletons too painful to visualize. The story is short but its suggestive dimension scale just mind boggling.
WORKS CITED


Ondaatjee, Michael. Guardian Unlimited @ Guastian Newspapers limited, accessed on October 7, 2002.


[All the references in the parenthesis are from these editions only]