Chapter 3
Just The Way I Am

It’s hard to live with chronic pain
That others cannot see
I am trapped inside this body
With pain that has no end.

The thief that robbed my body
Stole my strength and left me pain
I do my very best to cope
I struggle to stay sane.

I miss out get-togethers
I miss shopping at the mall
It hurts me to be left behind
It’s not my choice at all.

I long for how it used to be
When I could join right in
To do the fun and simple things
With family and friends.

- Alice
Chapter 3

Stigmatized Social Ethos

We think we’re on top of the modern age, we boast that we’re natural techno fast-trackers, but that’s only true in the high rises of our minds. Down in the slums of our bodies, we’re still vulnerable to the most dis-orderly disorders, the scurviest of scurvies, the plaguiest of plagues.

(Rushdie 145)

Parenthood is one of the most important and demanding commitments adults undertake. Yet people are usually ill-prepared for it, when they nurture children with congenital disability, physical or mental. In much the same way, social and cultural factors which tend to shape behaviour and personality of the normal child act unfavourably upon exceptional children. The travails of the disabled people and their inability to cope with the pseudo social ethos are analyzed in this chapter with reference to William Faulkner’s Sound and Salman Rushdie’s Moor’s. These two novels insist on the need to cultivate a humanitarian perspective to solve issues relating to the mentally disabled children who needs a consummate mother, warm and gentle showing an assuring presence in the midst of darkness and despair.

In 1949 Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Often the most distinguished of Faulkner’s achievements are also his most difficult novels. Faulkner, in Sound through interior monologues narrates a continuous story and represents the exigency of a mentally disabled person Benjy, from a different perspective. The novel is constructed upon
a successive retelling of a single story from four different points of view. The first seventy pages are told by a congenital imbecile Benjy, a man of thirty three whose development has not advanced beyond babyhood. In Sound Faulkner has used new techniques to express his views regarding the position of mentally disabled persons in the modern world. He sees man as a weak creature incapable of rising above his selfish needs and of meeting out the special needs of the mentally disabled people. In Sound Faulkner has penetrated deeply into the deranged psyche and identified psychological reasons for the actions of the mentally disabled.

Faulkner plays with the idea that the life of a mentally disabled person in the modern scenario is nothing but a shadow. The word shadow appears constantly throughout the second section and it occurs frequently throughout the rest of the three sections of the novel. The implication that life is a shadow is also used by Faulkner to suggest that the actions performed by modern man are only shadows of the greater actions performed by men of the past.

Many of Faulkner’s novels explore the deterioration of the Southern aristocracy after the destruction of its wealth and way of life during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Faulkner populates Yoknapatawpha Country with the skeletons of old mansions and the ghosts of great men and generals from the past whose aristocratic families fail to live up to their historical greatness.

The Civil War and Reconstruction devastated many of these once-great Southern families economically, socially, and psychologically. Faulkner focuses his attention upon a mentally disabled person in a family like Compsons. Beneath the shadow of past grandeur, these families attempt to cling to old Southern values, codes, and myths that are corrupted and out of place in the present reality that is the modern world. The families in Faulkner’s novels are rife with failed sons, disgraced daughters, and smoldering resentments between whites and blacks as the aftermath of African-American slavery. In the process, the Compsons are lost in
a haze of self-absorption. This self-absorption has corrupted the core values which were held
dear once but the newer generations, which are completely unequipped to deal with the
realities of the modern world, can not observe them which in turn increases the debility of the
mentally disabled person like Benjy.

The Compsons are one of several prominent names in the town of Jefferson,
Mississippi. Their ancestors helped to settle down in the area and subsequently defend it
during the Civil War. Since the war, the Compsons have seen their wealth, land, and status
gradually crumbling away. Mr. Compson is an alcoholic; Mrs. Compson is a self-absorbed
hypochondriac who depends almost entirely upon Dilsey, the servant maid to raise her four
children. Quentin, the oldest child, is a sensitive bundle of neuroses. Caddy is stubborn, but
loving and compassionate. Jason is mean-spirited since birth and is largely spurned by the
other children. Benjy is mentally disabled with no understanding of the concept of time. In
the absence of the self-absorbed Mrs. Compson, Caddy serves as a mother figure and a
symbol of affection for Benjy and Quentin.

A moaning, speechless “idiot”, Benjy is utterly dependent upon Caddy, his only source
of affection. Benjy cannot understand any abstract concepts such as time, cause and effect, or
right and wrong. He merely absorbs visual and auditory cues from the world around him.
Despite his utter inability to understand or interpret the world, Benjy surprisingly does have
an acute sensitivity to order and chaos, and he can immediately sense the presence of anything
bad, wrong, or out of place. He is able to sense Quentin’s suicide thousands of miles away at
Harvard, and senses Caddy’s promiscuity and loss of virginity. Benjy has this rare sensitivity
and perceptive ability. Benjy is the only character who truly takes notice of the Compson
family’s progressing decline. However, his disability restrains Benjy from formulating any
response other than moaning and crying. Benjy’s impotence and the impotence of all the
remaining Compson men are symbolized and embodied by his castration during his teenage years.

One can witness how corruption runs rampant in the Compson family. Mr. Compson has vague notion of family honour-something he passes on to Quentin his eldest son and is mired in his alcoholism and maintains a fatalistic belief that he cannot control the events that befall his family. Mrs. Compson does not have emotional intimacy with her children. She keeps herself away from them. Quentin’s obsession with old Southern morality paralyzes him and he is unable to move past his family’s sins. Caddy tramples on the Southern notion of feminine purity and indulges in promiscuity, and so does her daughter. Jason indulges in self-pity. He is also greedy and he has been striving constantly for personal gain but with no higher aspirations. Benjy commits no real sins, but the Compsons’ decline is physically manifested through his retardation and his inability to express.

The Compsons’ corruption of Southern values, result in a household that is completely devoid of love, the force that once strung the family together. Both the parents are distant and ineffective. Caddy, the only child who has the ability to love is eventually disowned. Though Quentin loves Caddy, his love is neurotic, obsessive, and overprotective. None of the men experiences any true romantic love, and consequently they are unable to marry and perpetuate the family name.

In the conclusion of the novel, Dilsey the servant maid is the only loving member of the household, the only character who maintains her values without the corrupting influence of self absorption. She thus represents the hope for the renewal of traditional Southern values in an uncorrupted and positive form. The novel ends with Dilsey as the torchbearer for these values, and as such, the only hope for the preservation of human values. Faulkner once said that the novel:
Began with a picture of the little girl’s muddy drawers, climbing the tree to look into the window with her brothers who didn’t have the courage to climb the tree, wanting to see what she saw. And I tried first to tell it with one brother and that wasn’t enough. That was section two. I tried the third brother, because Caddy was still to me too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, that it would be more passionate to see her through somebody else’s eyes, I thought. And that failed and I tried myself – the fourth section – to tell what happened and I still failed.

(qtd. In Bleikasten 21)

The final section is narrated by the author. The principal concern slowly transfers from Caddy to Benjy – a mentally disabled person. Faulkner steps back from the closeness of the earlier sections and presents a rather panoramic view of the entire Compson world and Benjy in particular. The significant thing is that Faulkner did achieve or create one of the world’s greatest works exposing the inner world of a mentally disabled person. The technique Faulkner adopts to achieve his motif is stream of consciousness. As a technique, stream of consciousness was first used in English by James Joyce and Virginia woolf. But Faulkner’s use of this technique in Sound is probably the most successful and outstanding and exploits the mind reading of a mentally disabled person.

When Sound first appeared, the most frequent criticism was that the four sections were arbitrarily and capriciously distorted. Because the opening of Sound is so different from anything else that has been written so far, a large number of critics and readers were confused by the Benjy’s section as the opening. It is terribly difficult to get through the Benjy’s section without throwing up one’s hands in total despair. Many critics felt that this section of the
novel narrated through the mind of a thirty-three-year-old imbecile idiot presented to the reader an insurmountable obstacle.

Some critics feel that some other order would have been more effective on the first reading. Others are of the opinion that the novel should begin with the final section and others feel that Jason’s section should come first. Since a novel can never be judged by its first reading, it is on subsequent readings of Sound it dawns on the readers that Faulkner presented the story deliberately and in its most effective order. “I myself share this initial prejudice. Yet I have read the Sound three times now, and that not in the least for exercise, but for pure pleasure” (43) applauds Bloom.

To tell such a different story in chronological order is to destroy much of its literary and psychological value. Further Faulkner wants his readers to look at and understand life from the point of view of a mentally disabled person like Benjy. Hence this section through its narrative method enables the readers to perceive the events through the eyes of Benjy. The utter confusion and illogicality of modern world is matched with Benjy who is incapable of logical thinking and known for terribly confused jump back narration. Added to that, “Benjy is the right person to narrate the promiscuous order promiscuous relationship and the promiscuous mentality of people. No other writer would have dared to attempt a beginning as in Sound with Benjy as his mouth piece” (Cowan 13).

Above all if life is a “tale told by an idiot” then Faulkner has his justification for having the first part of the story told through the mind of a thirty-three-year-old idiot, revealing “sound and fury” signifying many things. It is the clearest, the cleverest and the only possible method of depicting the inner agony of a mentally disabled person.

Benjy’s section presents the idea of the whole novel in miniature, and also gives the readers the glimpse of the future character traits of each individual. The readers see the
muddy drawers of Caddy, Quentin’s attempt to protect Caddy, Benjy’s ability to sense deviations, and Jason’s isolation and sadism. These are qualities which become the prominent traits in the characters as they grow up. If the readers had one of the other three sections (Quentin section, Jason section, and author’s section) first these ideas would have lost their power and significance. Added to this Faulkner achieves a great and powerful emotional impact by presenting Benjy’s section first. For example the reader is informed of certain things which he is unable to capture in its full dimensions. Later on in other sections there is a sudden and overwhelming realization of what has happened in Benjy’s section. This impact would lose its intensity if Benjy’s section is not presented first.

There are also some unusual justifications for the appearance of Benjy’s section first. Among them is Bleikasten interpretation that “Benjy represents the Freudian “id” of the family, and since the id is the most fundamental aspect of one’s personality, it must come first” (16). Benjy’s section is full of ideas and the outcome of the ideas being actions they are presented in Quentin. The person in the novel who is most directly affected by the actions is Quentin. Therefore Faulkner presents his section secondly. Quentin’s section indirectly presents the question; if modern man cannot exist long enough to see the tragedy, how unpalatable would be the condition of a mentally disabled person in this dehumanized world. At least Quentin has his escapism in suicide but Benjy has to live and face the horrible world.

If Benjy’s section presents the confusion of time and Quentin’s section presents the intricacies of mind, the third section, Jason section, races along as it records the simple thought of an evil man – a man who makes no attempt to disguise his ulterior motives. It is ironic that the most evil character in the novel is the one who offers the clearest and most vivid account of the family. Faulkner also makes it clear in this section how it is difficult for a mentally disabled person to survive amidst the dastardliness of people like Jason.
The final section is narrated by the author. But the central figure here is Disley, the only soul who cares for Benjy next to Caddy. So far Faulkner has allowed his readers to be intimately inside the minds of three characters. But in the last section, he takes them a step back from the immediacy of the situation and view Benjy in his grand tragic scale. Further more, by telling the last section himself Faulkner presents the inter-relationships between the characters more objectively. The final section projects in an objective manner, Compson family and the world in general as actors on a stage, rather than as human beings endowed with the unique gift of God i.e humanism. In short Faulkner in Sound presents the horror of mentally disabled person’s life in a world dominated by inhuman dastards in a large, objective and panoramic view.

The date of Benjy’s section is April 7, 1928. This is the Saturday before Easter Sunday. It is also Benjy’s birthday. It is not the pleasant April that Chaucer delineates in his Prologue to Canterbury Tales. It is the April of Eliot’s The Waste Land where, “April is the cruelest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire …” (2-4). Benjy as Sidney’s Nightingale expresses his grief in the month of April:

…as soon as April bringeth

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Sings out her woes, a thorn her song-book making;
And mournfully be wailing,
Her throat in tunes expressth
What grief her breast oppresseth (qtd. in Green 44).

All these facts have a certain symbolic importance. April as a month is symbolic. It is the symbol of growth and decay, of life and death. It is the month in which Christ was crucified, and the Saturday between the Friday of crucifixion and the Sunday of resurrection is
supposedly one of the darkest days in the history of western culture. April is also the month when all things begin growing again. It is the beginning of the cycle of life. In this month of rebirth, Benjy is conscious only of ‘death in life’ as many of the things he remembers is connected with funerals and deaths.

Faulkner splendidly places the imbecile Benjy in the midst of the greenness of April and through his moaning exposes the ‘Grave hopeless sound of all the voiceless misery under the sun’. Faulkner portrays the pathetic condition of the mentally disabled men through Benjy. The mentally retarded are not just denied equal treatment in a dehumanized society but they are treated as ill omen. Benjy is equated with screech owl and a howling dog.

Roskus, husband of Disley, says that there is no luck on this place, because he has seen three omen – the fifteen years old imbecile idiot Benjy, the screech owl and the howling dog. Pointing to Benjy who is lying on the bed Roskus says, ‘Ain’t the sign of it laying right there on that bed … And folks don’t like to look at a loony. Tain’t no luck in it’ (17).

Frony, Disley’s daughter, tells her brother Luster to take the dog Blue and Benjy down to the barn because their howling and moaning bother her. Roskus constantly complains of his hand; “I can’t use my right hand no more and the doctor can’t do no good, because ‘taint’ no luck on this place” (17).

Faulkner also provides ample evidences to prove how society stands as an obstacle to the normalcy of the mentally disabled people. Once Mr. Maury, Benjy’s uncle wanted Benjy to deliver a love letter to Mrs. Patterson:

Mr. Patterson was chopping in the green flowers. He stopped chopping and looked at me. Mrs. Patterson came across the garden, running. When I saw her eyes I began to cry. You idiot, Mrs. Patterson said, I told him never to send you alone again. Give it to me. Quick Mr. Patterson came fast with the hoe.
Mrs. Pattern leaned across the fence reaching her hand. She was trying to climb the fence. Give it to me, she said, give it to me. Mr. Patterson climbed the fence. He took the letter. Mrs. Pattern dress was caught on the fence. I saw her eyes again and I ran down the hill. (12)

Benjy’s reaction here is very important. He is doing fine until he looks at Mrs. Patterson’s eyes and sees hostility in them. Thus he becomes frightened and can not move, and Mr. Patterson is able to intercept the letter. Had Mrs. Patterson not been so hostile, Benjy would not have become frightened. All that Benjy needs is little kindness and understanding from others.

Faulkner devotes an entire section to expose the factors that debilitate a mentally disabled person. It is told as though the reader is inside the mind of the thirty-three-years-old mentally disabled person. Certain things make an impression on Benjy’s mind, but he cannot correlate or connect things except through a basic sensuous impression. For example when he hears the golfers call for their “Caddie”, the name reminds him of his sister Caddy whom he loved more than any other person. Consequently the mention of her name causes him to start moaning. Like wise, the golf course at one time was a pasture that belonged to Compsons. It was generally referred to as Benjy’s pasture. In 1909 Mr. Compson sold this pasture so as to send Quentin to college and to buy more liquor for him. Further more, the golf ball perhaps reminds Benjy of his castration when he was 15. Thus Faulkner splendidly illustrates the factors that debilitate Benjy who has undergone loss of love (Caddy), loss of property (pasture), loss of life (castration) and truly Benjy’s life is ‘Living and partly living’.

Society always refuses to accept that the mentally disabled people have a world of their own, with love, sentiments and pain. When Disley sends Luster her son and Benjy out in order to protect Benjy from the whining remarks of Jason and Miss Quentin, Luster takes
Benjy over by the Golf course and as soon as Benjy hears one of the golfers call, his daughter Caddie, he begins to cry and moan in memory of his sister Caddy. To annoy Benjy, Luster hollers the name Caddy several times, with out any pity and understanding.

Faulkner also symbolically shows, how there is no deviation in the life of the mentally disabled people from the established order but very much in the life of the so called abled people. Dilsey hears Benjy’s crying and bellowing and tells Luster to bring him home. Benjy continues to moan, and to keep him from disturbing Mrs.Compson, she allows Luster to take Benjy for a ride on the Surrey. Dilsey tells Luster to be sure and go exact by on the same way that J.P, her elder son always used to take Benjy. Luster agrees, and they set out on their ride.

When they reach the Square, Luster sees a group of Negroes to the left, and he decides to show them “how quality does”. Therefore he turns to the left rather than to the usual right. As soon as Luster breaks the established order of Benjy’s route, Benjy begins to bellow and howl. His howling and bellowing is the loudest that Luster has ever heard. It is so loud that Jason hears it and comes to the Surrey and hits Benjy and sends them all home. Benjy’s bellowing indicates moral disorder in a society which is supposed to be cultured, educated and sophisticated. As soon as the surrey is turned around, Benjy is happy again and sits looking contentedly at the horses “each in its ordered place”. In fact the abled people in the novel are consistently inconsistent by deviating from and violating the established orders.

Society is inconsiderate to the mentally challenged one. Once, Benjy wants to play with the golf ball which Luster has stolen from the ground, Luster refuses to give him the ball saying, “Listen at you now, Ain’t you something thirty-three years old, going on that way … Hush up that moaning” (1). Society fails to understand the disparity between Benjy’s physic and psyche.
There is a vast difference between Benjy’s actual age and stage. Though physically he is thirty-three, mentally he is just three. He is also denied the status of a human. At the time of Caddy’s marriage, Benjy is shut in a room and is not permitted to see the face of Caddy, the only soul who has understood him and whom he loves to the core. Benjy looks through the window and seeing Caddy in her wedding gown and veil, begins to cry for her. T.P. again mistaking Benjy’s moaning to be his idiotic arrogance gives him sassprilluh (liquor) to end his moaning. Failing to understand the implications of his moaning, unhesitatingly liquor is given to Benjy, because others consider his moaning nonsensical.

Benjy’s genuine longing to see the face of his sister, his only solace, is suppressed by intoxication which is given to him in a beastly manner. “They held me. It was hot on my chin and on my shirt … They held my head. It was not inside me and I cried now, and something was happening inside me and I cried more …” “You ain’t got to start bellowing now, T.P. said. You want some this sassprilluh… If you ain’t going to drink it, let me get to it, T.P. said” (20)

Society perceives the mentally disabled person only as a complete idiot and this is yet another debilitating factor. Benjy is not completely devoid of rational thinking as people believe him to be. Once he is made to sleep in uncle Maury’s room. Suddenly he is reminded of the episode of his failing to deliver uncle Maury’s letter to Mrs. Patterson. Benjy is able to correlate Maury’s name and room with his action. When there is a repetition of events, the first thing that comes to his mind is men and their action, good or bad and he acts accordingly. The shift in time between these two scenes is not indicated by italics. Benjy goes right from 1908 to 1903 without any indication of a shift. Faulkner who usually distinguishes the change in time deliberately never does it here to show how in a lightning speed Benjy’s mind correlates events.
Faulkner in *Sound* exploits the stream of consciousness technique to show how Benjy’s past memories affect the present. When Benjy remembers the past event with Caddy at the swing, he proceeds towards the swing. But he is thoroughly mistaken by Miss. Quentin, Caddy’s daughter and she yells, “You old crazy loon, Quentin said. I’m going to tell about the way you… follow everywhere I go. I’ am going to whip you good” (46).

The oscillation which occurs in the mind of Benjy is not being understood by people like Miss. Quentin. Society needs extra humane perception to understand people like Benjy. The horrible turning point in the life of Benjy occurs a short time after Caddy’s marriage.

Benjy is standing near the gate and sees some young girls, pass with their book Satchels. Benjy misses Caddy so much that he tries to say something to the young girls:

I was trying to say and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out. I tried to get it off my face, but the bright shapes were going again. (51)

Benjy’s desire to go to the gate is prompted by the fact that he always stood there and waited for Caddy to come home from school. Now that Caddy has gone, Benjy keeps going to the gate hoping that she will come back to him. When some of the little girls come by, Benjy is further reminded of Caddy and tries to say something to the girls. Since he can not talk, his attempt only frightens the girls. T.P comes and scolds Benjy for scaring the young girls. “Here loony, here come some. Hush your slobbering and moaning now” (51).

Consequently, on one occasion, he finds that the gate is opened (some one left it unlatched) and he chases the girls trying to tell them how much he misses Caddy. He thinks that he is falling down the hill but actually one of the girls’ father who is close by, has hit Benjy over the head with a huge stick. Benjy does not even understand what has happend to
him. “… I tried to cry but when I breathed in, I couldn’t breathe out again to cry, and I tried to
keep from falling off the hill into the bright, whirling shapes” (51).

Nobody is ready to understand the thought current of Benjy and realize that it is
Benjy’s fond memory of Caddy that makes him share with the school girls. T.P whole
heartedly believes that Benjy has slipped out deliberately to scare the school girls.

You Benjy T.P said … ‘what you doing, slipping out. Don’t you know Dilsey
whip you’ ‘you can’t do no good, moaning and slobbering through the fence’
T.P said, ‘you done skeered them chillen. Look at them, walking on the other
side of the street. (60)

The uncompassionate environment that prevails at home is exemplified in the
following conversation between Benjy’s father and brother Jason. It highlights Benjy’s
pathetic situation:

How he got out, Father said. Did you leave the gate unlatched when you came
in Jason? Of course not, Jason said, Don’t you know I’ve got better sense than
to do that. Do you think I wanted anything like this to happen. This family
had enough, God knows. I could have told you, all the time. I reckon you’ll
send him to Jackson, now. If Mrs. Burgess don’t shoot him first. (50)

It is sad that neither Benjy’s father nor his brother makes any effort to understand the
emotional quotient of Benjy who deserves to converse with the school girl. Jason with his
characteristic sadism conceives that Benjy might have had some sexual urge that provoked
him to chase the little girls. The peak of horror that could happen in the life of a mentally
disabled person is castration. The Declaration of the Rights of Mentally retarded people states
that they should be protected against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a
discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature. But today:
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned. (Yeats 3-6)

Benjy is “wandering between two worlds, one dead, The other powerless to be born” (Arnold 7-9). Faulkner uses subtle suggestions rather than outright explanation to convey the horror inflicted upon the mentally disabled people. The readers are never told explicitly about the castration of Benjy. As Coleridge puts it in his” The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, it is a sight to dream of and not to tell. Society spares womanizers and loafers like Dalton Ames who seduced Caddy or Gerald who says “women … are all bitches”. But it victimizes and castrates Benjy who is innocent and longs for love and affection. The tragedy of Benjy depends upon “… the relation between the act and man’s apprehension of the act, between the event and the interpretation” (Minter 77).

The events pertaining to helplessness of Benjy is brought out in yet another situation by Faulkner in the year 1928. Benjy gets undressed and when he looks at himself he begins to cry: “I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. Looking for them ain’t going to do no good. They’ve gone”. (71)

The memory of Caddy and the possible memory of his castration mentally disturb Benjy and he keeps moaning. Again when Luster tries to sell the golf ball to the white man, Benjy continues to moan. The white man does not buy Luster’s ball, he just keeps it. When the golfer calls “Caddie” Benjy begins to cry. Luster gets him a new jimson weed to keep him quiet. Benjy does not stop crying and Luster takes Benjy’s flowers away and yells “Caddy”.

Faulkner’s aim in exposing the pitiable condition of a mentally disabled person is apparent in this scene as he shows Benjy remembering his castration. Luster trying to sell
golf ball and the golfer sadistically taking the ball from Luster by force is equated with Benjy’s testicles taken from him without proper motivation. When the same brutal man calls “Caddie” Benjy’s sense of frustration mounts. Dilsey takes Benjy to the kitchen and opens the stove so that Benjy can watch the fire and be quiet. The fire symbolically reflects the inner burning of both Benjy and the readers. The innocence of a mentally disabled person is thus paid through his castration.

None except Caddy and Disley accept Benjy as he is. Everyone wants Benjy to fit in to their taste and needs. Without realizing the psychological age and the physiological age, Luster wants Benjy to help him in searching a quarter he has lost, in order to go to the traveling show. Luster argues: “Ain’t you going to help me find that quarter so I can go to the show tonight” (52). In his attempt Benjy gets snagged on a nail and he is fired again by Luster for he can not realize the fact that though he is thirty three physiologically, psychologically he is just three. “You snagged on that nail again. Can’t you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail” (52).

The harsh words of Luster bring to Benjy’s mind yet another incident when Uncle Maury sends Caddy on an errand to deliver a letter to Mrs. Patterson. As usual Benjy accompanies Caddy. She is so concerned and has been guiding him all along.

Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see … keep your hands in your pockets, Caddy said. Or they’ll get froze. You don’t want your hands froze on Christmas, do you. (2)

The motherly concern of Caddy makes Benjy moan. Luster retorts sharply: “Now you ain’t got nothing to moan about’. Luster said. ‘Hush up. I the one got something to moan over, you
ain’t … He came and caught my arm ‘you old loony’, he said. ‘you want me to whip you’ (15).

It is indigestible and unendurable to notice that the man who is appointed to affectionately look after a mentally disabled person does not do his duty. Instead he beats Benjy and sends him on an errand. He totally exploits him. Not only the servants even Maury, who is Benjy’s maternal uncle, is not an exception in exploiting Benjy. Along with his sister, he feels Benjy is a ‘judgment’ rather a curse on their family.

There is a strange inhumanity about Jason, Benjy’s brother. It is obviously seen during the castration of Benjy. Faulkner shows that sadism is his second skin right from his childhood. The following conversation exemplifies Jason’s pervasive nature:

He cut up all Benjy’s dolls’. Caddy said.
‘I’ll slit his gizzle … He cut up all the dolls Mau-Benjy and I made.
Caddy said.
‘He did it just for meanness’.
‘I didn’t. Jason said. ‘I didn’t know they were his. I just thought they were some old paper’.
‘you couldn’t help but know’. Caddy said. ‘you did it just for meanness’. (63)

Jason always frustrates Benjy. He shows malicious pleasure even in destroying the paper dolls of Benjy. Caddy calls him mean. Thus Caddy’s desire to protect Benjy and Jason’s attempts to harm him are the double-edged quality of life in a society. Jason resents the presence of Benjy: “Keep him quiet’. Jason said. Do I have to work all day and then come home to a mad house… I reckon you’ll send him to Jackson’”(64).
Benjy is driven from pillar to post. Jason does not want to see him in the living room and he is bent on sending him to the kitchen. But Mrs. Compson does not want Benjy to disturb her while she is having her supper:

Why don’t you let him alone, then’. Jason said.

If you can’t keep him quiet, you’ll have to take him out to the kitchen. The rest of us can’t shut ourselves up in a room like mother does’.

‘Mammy say keep him out the kitchen till she get supper’, Luster said. (63)

Thus Benjy is forced to spend most of his time in the backyard. These people not only fail to understand Benjy’s feelings, but also do fail to respond positively to his feelings too. Whenever Benjy goes out of the door he hears the sound of the girls passing by the gates with their book satchels:

I tried to say, but they went on, and I went along the fence, crying to say and they went faster. Then they were running and I came to the corner of the fence and I couldn’t go any further, and I held to the fence, looking after them and trying to say. (49)

T.P is able to grasp what is going on in the mind of Benjy and consoles him lovingly: “You can’t do no good looking through the gate, T.P. said. Miss. Caddy done gone long ways away. Done got married and left you. You can’t do no good, holding to the gate and crying. She can’t hear you” (49).

Ironically, Mrs. Compson the mother, who is supposed to be thorough with her child’s psychology, is completely devoid of any concern or understanding:

What is it he wants T.P? mother said. Can’t you keep him quiet.
Ain’t nothing going to quiet him, T.P. Said. He think if he down to the

gate, Miss Caddy come back.

Nonsense, Mother said. (49)

Mrs. Compson is known for her blunt indifference which is not expected of her position as a

mother. Hence Jason takes a perverse delight in annoying and tormenting Benjy. Finally he is

the one who is responsible for sending Benjy to mental asylum. Benjy is a sacrificial little

lamb at the altar of demonic forces.

Benjy is named Maury after Mrs. Compson’s brother. When it was apparent that her

child is a mentally disabled person she does not want her son to have her family name Maury,

because it will be a great disgrace to the reputation of the family and will not add any luck.

Hence she has changed his name from Maury to Benjamin. Mrs. Compson fails to realize how

startling and perplexing it would be for a mentally disabled child of five to be addressed with

a new name, all of a sudden. It would be challenging even for a normal child’s cognitive

capacity to get along with the new name.

A mother is supposed to have unshakable faith and concern of her child. Mrs.

Compson on the other hand has deprived herself of the divinity of motherhood. But she is

strict in adhering to her pseudo ethos, like addressing people with their full name. When

Caddy fondly calls Benjamin as Benjy she retorts it:

‘Candace’, Mother said, ‘I told you not to call him that. It was bad enough

when your father insisted on calling you by that silly nickname, and I will not

have him called by one. Nicknames are vulgar. Only common people use

them. Benjamin’ She said. (43)

She is very cautious in maintaining her pseudo, stigmatized ethos and social prestige

and never minds about the consequence of such actions. Roskus’s grudging that there is no
luck in that place because of Benjy is strengthened by the act of changing Benjy’s name. He mutters, “There can be no luck on place where they own chillens’ name aint never spoke” (17).

Versh, the servant, gives a horrible colour to this changing of name. He calls Benjy a Bluegum child and that is why his name has been changed. Bluegum children are those whose mothers were affected in some way before birth and the child was born mentally retarded. It is an old Mississippi legend that if a Bluegum child bites another individual he will go mad. Often the Bluegum child is abandoned for the care of the state or community. Having this notion in mind Versh says,

Your name Benjamin now. You know how come your name Benjamin now. They making a Bluegum out of you. Mammy say in old time your grandpa changed nigger’s name, and he turn preacher, and when they look at him, he Bluegum too. Didn’t use to be Bluegum, neither. And when family woman look him in the eye in the full of the moon, chile born Bluegum. And one evening, when they was about a dozen them bluegum chillen running round the place, he never come home. Possum hunters found him in the woods, et clean. And you know who et him. Them Bluegum chillen did”. (67)

Faulkner also exhibits the horrible condition; a mentally disabled child of five is exposed to. Benjy’s little heart is already confused and is now horrified to the core by the Bluegum story. It is too heavy for his age and stage. It is only Caddy who puts it in a palatable and positive manner to Benjy: “Benjamin came out of the Bible, Caddy said. It’s a better name for him than Maury was” (56).
Next to Caddy it is Disley who has a great concern for Benjy and she addresses him ‘Maury’ as usual. When Caddy reminds her of the changing of name, Disley does not see the need for changing the name:

Huh, Disley said. Name ain’t going to help him. Hurt him neither. Folks don’t have no luck, changing names: My name been Disley since fore I could remember and it be Disley when they’s long forget me … It’ll be in the book … Writ on. (56)

When Caddy asks her whether she can read it she says, “Won’t have to, Disley said. They’ll – read it for me. All I got to do is say I se here” (56).

Disley is the only soul who can accomplish things without creating more disorder than originally prevailed. She has great faith in and reliance upon the goodness of the “Lawd” and acceptance of all the “Lawd’s Creatures”. This acceptance makes her extend her love to the mentally disabled Benjy and helps her understand what is wrong with him to cater to his needs without upsetting him. Faulkner illustrates how this concern and ability of an illiterate woman is in direct contrast to Mrs. Compson who is the cause of making Benjy an object of ridicule and horror.

In the delineation of events related to Benjy, it is Caddy who always comes in to bridge the gap. She also functions as a type of potential mother. Even in her early stage Mr. Compson asks Caddy to look after Benjy because Mrs. Compson turns the situation from bad to worse. One is wonderstruck to see the way in which Caddy feeds Benjy even at an early stage. Faulkner adds a unique motherly touch to her when she says Benjy is eating well and must be very hungry: “Then the bowl was empty. It went away. ‘He is hungry tonight’. Caddy said. The bowl came back …’He’s starved to night’. Caddy said. ‘Look how much he’s eaten’ ” (68).
While the real mother Mrs. Compson, never permits Benjy in the dinning hall when she is having food Caddy, the mother incarnate or the substitute mother does more than what is expected of a real mother. Not only Caddy’s predecessor-Mrs.Compson, her mother but also her successor - Miss Quentin, her daughter, is also a foil to Caddy. She fires Benjy for fondly holding the slippers of Caddy. “Has he got to keep that old dirty slipper on the table, Quentin said. Why don’t you feed him in the kitchen. It’s like eating with a pig” (68).

While Mrs. Compson always thinks that Benjy is her punishment for marrying into the proud Compson family and shows reluctance in taking care of Benjy, Caddy willingly and affectionately volunteers to that. “It’s a judgment on me’. Mother said. ‘But I’ll be gone too, soon’. …‘You don’t need to bother with him’. Caddy said. ‘I like to take care of him. Don’t I, Benjy’ ” (61).

While a girl of seven understands the psychology of Benjy and is well-versed with his likes and dislikes, all that Mrs. Compson does is to upset Benjy by demanding that he should learn to mind.

Look at me’. Mother said.

‘Benjamin’, she said. ‘Take that Cushion away Candace’.

‘He’ll cry’. Caddy said.

‘Take that cushion away, like I told you.’ Mother said.

‘He must learn to mind’.

The cushion went away.

‘Hush, Benjy’. Caddy said.

‘You go over there and sit down’ Mother said.

‘Benjamin’. She held my face to hers.

‘Stop that’. She said. ‘Stop it’.
But I didn’t stop and Mother caught me in her arms and began to cry, and I cried.

… ‘Hush, Mother’. Caddy said. ‘You go upstairs and lay down, so you can be sick. She led me to the fire and I looked at the bright, smooth shapes. I could hear the fire and the roof. (62)

Parent’s role is very crucial, especially for babies and young children, as the first few formative years of a child determine and shape its entire-life. Like Mrs. Rose of *Flowers*, Mrs. Compson contributes only to the debilitating factors which ruin the happiness of Benjy. Thus Caddy always tries her level best to keep Benjy away from Mrs. Compson so that neither of them would be upset.

Faulkner clearly exhibits that there can be no cruel debility to a mentally disabled child like Benjy than a highly irresponsible and inefficient mother. She thinks a negro servant is more than enough to bring up a mentally disabled child and her responsibility as a mother ends up with that. “What is it now … Do I have to get up out of bed to come down to him, with two grown negroes to take care of him, …’Hush’ she said. ‘Right this minute’”(57).

As a mother she does not want to know the reason for Benjy’s bellowing. She wants him to be quiet ‘right that minute’. Whenever she tries to correct Benjy, she only makes him cry more. She hardly realizes his needs and even if she does she would not take the trouble to administer them.

Though Caddy is young, her ability to understand Benjy comes out of her whole hearted love towards him. She is the only person who gives him an opportunity to voice out his feelings.

Caddy was walking. Then she was running, her book-satchel swinging and bouncing behind her. ‘Hello, Benjy’. Caddy said. She opened the gate, and came in
and stooped down. Caddy smelled like leaves. ‘Did you come to meet me’.

She said. ‘Did you come to meet Caddy … rubbing my hands. ‘What is it. What are you trying to tell Caddy’. Caddy smelled like trees. (10)

Her very presence signifies Christmas for Benjy.

What is it’. Caddy said. ‘Did you think it would be Christmas when I came home from school. Is that what you thought. Christmas is the day after tomorrow Santy Claus, Benjy. Santy Claus. Come on, let’s run to the house and get warm. (5)

Caddy’s concern moves the readers when she advises her brother: “Keep your hands in your pockets, Caddy said. Or they’ll get froze. You don’t want your hands froze on Christmas, do you” (4). Caddy’s love is genuine and it never anticipates anything in return. She is the anchor of Benjy’s purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul of all his moral being. Caddy’s profound love for Benjy is exemplified throughout.

When Mrs. Compson addresses Benjy as “My poor baby”, Caddy does not want Benjy to entertain the ‘poor thing syndrome’ in his heart. She assures: “You’re not a poor baby. Are you. You’ve got your Caddy. Haven’t you got your Caddy” (7).

Faulkner asserts that lack of assurance, sense of belonging, courage and confidence in the life of mentally disabled people is the greatest debility society imposes upon them. He also illustrates how well Caddy understands Benjy and how inept Mrs. Compson is in handling Benjy. Her ineptness is also wrapped in selfishness. Once uncle Maury wants Caddy to run on an errand for him (i.e. to take a love letter to Mrs. Patterson). Caddy wants Benjy to go with her. Instantly Mrs. Compson started her neurotic shouting. “‘Are you going to take that baby out without his overshoes’, Mother said”. (6)
It appears that Mrs. Compson is very much worried about his health. But the truth is different. She does not want Benjy to fall sick, because his illness would bring lot of people to house and she has to entertain everyone. The readers are stunned, when she questions: “Do you want to make him sick, with the house full of company” (5).

More than the boy’s sickness, the thought that arrival of relations would inconvenience her, prevents Mrs. Compson, Caddy taking Benjy with her. Mrs. Compson’s lack of motherly concern, impatience, selfishness and whining neuroticism are aptly illustrated in the novel by Faulkner. Whenever Caddy volunteers to carry her brother, Mrs. Compson does not permit her to do so. Mrs. Compson is image-conscious and therefore she will not allow her daughter Caddy, to carry Benjy on her back. She feels such an attempt will make Caddy look like a washer woman.

He’s too big for you to carry. You must stop trying. You’ll injure your back.

All of our women have prided themselves on their carriage. Do you want to look like a washer-woman’. ‘He’s is not too heavy’. Caddy said. ‘I can carry him’.

‘A five years old child. No, no. Not in my lap. Let him stand up’. (59)

Mrs. Compson is an epitome of hypocritical ethos. Once Benjy feels sleepy and he has been carried to his mother to say good night. It is only seven in the evening and Mrs. Compson has refused to allow Benjy to go to bed.

‘What time is it’. Mother said. Her eyes were closed.

‘Ten minutes to seven’. Father said.

‘It’s too early for him to go to bed’. Mother said ‘He’ll wake up at day break, and I simply cannot bear another day’. (59)

What is lacking in Benjy’s mother is complemented by Caddy who is the only solace in Benjy’s life. He has miserably lost that life of comfort after Caddy’s marriage. Even as a
bride Caddy’s sense of responsibility never diminishes. On the day of her marriage, Benjy is confined to the backyard. Benjy looks through the window and when he sees Caddy in her wedding gown and veil he begins to cry for her. Caddy, unmindful of the wedding ceremonies, rushes to Benjy to console him. Even after the marriage it is this unselfish love that makes her handover Benjy to Quentin. “You’ll have to promise … Just promise … don’t let them send him to Jackson, Promise” (83).

Mrs. Compson never tries to cope with the special needs of her mentally disabled child. She does not even remember her son’s birthday. It is Dilsey – the servant maid who remembers Benjy’s birthday and brings him some cake out of her own money. Mrs. Compson does not feel guilty; instead she complains about the quality of the cake that Dilsey has got Benjy for his birthday.

‘Did you give him this Cake’.

‘I bought it’. Dilsey said. ‘It never come out of Jason’s Pantry. I fixed him some birthday’.

‘Do you want to poison him with that cheap store cake’. Mother said. ‘Is that what you are trying to do. Am I never to have one minute’s peace’. (58)

While Mrs. Compson is very cautious in maintaining her masquerade she fails to comprehend and fulfill the needs of her mentally disabled child Benjy. She is also a poor judge of men and matters. Caddy seems to be the only child who is concerned about the welfare of Mrs. Compson and ironically it is Mrs. Compson who turns most violently against Caddy. Similarly it is quite ironical that Mrs. Compson showers her love on Jason who neither requires her nearness nor returns her attention gratefully. Along with Benjy and Caddy, even Quentin feels neglected. He cries out in a moment of depression and agony: “If I could say Mother, Mother … If I’d just had a mother so I could say say Mother Mother” (98).
This failure of Mrs. Compson as a mother is one of the reason for Caddy’s promiscuity. Besides, her father’s cynical attitude too intensifies her loneliness due to which she rebels against the hypocrisy, artificiality and false pride of the Compsons. She wants to be totally unorthodox in her behaviour so that she can assert her own independence and individuality. In fact she does not enjoy her relationship with men and tells Quentin, “When they touched me I died” (106). Caddy’s promiscuity and Mrs. Compson’s supposed ideal womanhood bring to one’s mind Oscar Wilde’s statement:

“I don’t think that people can be divided into the good and the bad as though they were two separate races or creations. What are called good women may have terrible things in them, mad moods of recklessness, assertion, jealousy, sin. Bad women, as they are termed, may have in them sorrow, repentance, pity, sacrifice”. (3.2.14-20)

The ultimate result is, Benjy loses Caddy and he is left uncared for after her departure. Faulkner focuses his attention on the psychological trauma a mentally disabled child will undergo without the love and understanding of a mother like Mrs. Compson. Faulkner also exposes the nature of an inconsiderate mother who prefers the immoral, materialistic, evil-minded, perverse son to a mentally disabled son who genuinely needs her love and warmth.

Mrs. Compson says Jason is the only child who takes after the BasCombs rather than the Compsons. All along she wants to take Jason, the only one she loves, and go away from all of them, so that Jason would have a chance of success without being affected by the Compson decadence. Immediately after Mr. Compson’s death, Jason goes to his mother and informs her that he would be able to deposit his monthly wages in her name, but to do so he needs her power of attorney.
Mrs. Compson is proud that Jason is honest in giving her his cheque every month. But actually it is the money which Caddy has sent for her daughter. Jason loves money and nothing else. Apart from money, the only desire that he has is his intense love for his personal welfare. He exists solely for himself and believes that the entire world should dance to his tune. He denies any allegiance to or love for anyone except himself.

Jason is a sadist and it is seen in the way in which he burns the free pass to an evening show. Jason gets two free passes from the Earl. He offers to sell one of them to Luster for only five cents. But Luster does not have any money. So he torments Luster by dropping one of them into the fire. When Luster can not give him a nickel for the other one he burns the second too. His perversity is as strong as his self-centered esteem. His duplicity and hypocritical actions help him to successfully survive.

He cheats Mrs. Compson, whereas he respects the cheap whore that he keeps in Memphis. He derives immense delight in beating his niece not because her action is improper but because he feels that her action will make him a fool. Furthermore, if ever he loses control of her, the monthly cheque that he steals from Caddy will be lost to him. Jason is neither loyal to nor affectionate with his mother. A short time after Mr. Compson’s funeral, Mrs. Compson wants to take some flowers to the graveyard. Due to rheumatic pain, Roskus could not drive. Mrs. Compson is afraid to ride with T.P. Therefore when they reach the town Mrs. Compson stops to tell Jason they are going to the cemetery and she would feel safer if he accompanies them:

‘What do you want’. Jason said. He had his hands in his pockets and a pencil behind his ear’

‘We’re going to the cemetery? Mother said.
‘All right’. Jason Said. ‘I don’t aim to stop you, do I, was that all you wanted with me, just to tell me that’.

‘I know you won’t come’. Mother said. ‘I’d feel safer if you would’.

‘Safe from what’. Jason said. ‘Father and Quentin can’t hurt you’. (9)

Jason is the only child whom Mrs. Compson loved. But her love gets never reciprocated. Jason cashes in on her motherly sentiments to gain the power of attorney which will financially place him well. Unlike Jason, Benjy is capable of reciprocating love, affection and gratitude. Every incident makes Benjy think of the emotional bondage between Caddy and him. But nobody understands him.

Jason is highly critical of Benjy. He sarcastically addresses Benjy as ‘Great American Gelding’. But the elite qualities of human beings like love, reciprocation of love, and gratitude which are in abundance in the ‘great American Gelding’ are absent in Jason. Apparently, Jason is different from other children even at his early age. His mannerism – having his hands always in his pockets- is interpreted by Versh in a sarcastic sense. “His hands were in his pockets. ‘Jason going to be rich man’. Versh said. ‘He holding his money all the time’” (34). This is quite in contrast with Benjy who always keeps his hands in his pockets only to keep them warm. Throughout the novel Caddy persuades Benjy to keep his hands inside his pockets. Faulkner through this states that while people like Jason are running after money, the mentally disabled person like Benjy is longing for love, safety and security.

Faulkner shows several instances to reveal Benjy’s gratitude and reciprocation of love. Whenever he comes across the name Caddy he starts moaning in fond remembrance of Caddy. The meaning of his moaning is not being understood by Luster. Luster thinks that it is a senseless bellowing and teases Benjy to howl again. “‘Beller’. Luster said. ‘Beller. You want something to Beller about. All right, then. Caddy’. He whispered. ‘Caddy. Beller now
Caddy’ (52). Benjy gets comfort and solace in the company of Caddy, fire, mirror and cushion. Knowing his likes and dislikes thoroughly Caddy always gives him an opportunity to watch the fire. “You can look at the fire and the mirror and the cushion too, Caddy-said. You won’t have to wait until supper to look at the cushion, now” (64).

Later in his life when Benjy gets the chance to look at the fire he is reminded of Caddy’s concern which makes him bellow in fond memory of Caddy, which again is not understood by Luster and he threatens Benjy: “Hush up’. Luster said. ‘You hush up. You want me to burn your other hand for you” (58). Through out the novel Faulkner exposes Benjy’s attachment and attraction to cushion, fire, and mirror. Cushion symbolically represents the physical comfort for which the mentally disabled people always long for. A shoulder to lean on and a lap to sleep is their maximum requisite but it mostly remains an unfulfilled dream in their life. Fire is given a divine status in all major religions of the world and it stands for the omnipotent power that consumes all things that come in its way. The fire denotes the disabled community’s desire to posse a power that consumes all evil that interferes in their life.

It signifies their need for physical warmth and affection too It also represents their desire to be loved and comforted by the people around them. Of the three objects, indicated in the novel cushion denotes the tactile strength and fire and mirror refer to the visual factors enabling the mentally disabled to perceive the world. Being bereft of cognitive perception the mentally disabled lives through their physical senses and not through their mental sense.

Mirror stands as a symbol of acceptance. The disabled community expects the society to accept them with their plus and minus. Like the mirror it wants the society to embrace them as they are without adding any extra colour or deleting any colour from their personality.
But like Benjy the entire mentally disabled community is deprived of its expectations and each one appears to languish:

And still I gaze-and with how blank an eye!

... My genial spirits fail;

And what can these avail

To lift the smoothing weight from off my breast?

It were a vain endeavour,

Though I should gaze for ever. (Coleridge 14-19)

Faulkner portrays the trials and tribulations of a mentally disabled person in all its dimensions including time factor. For a mentally disabled person time is almost disregarded. Benjy is completely oblivious of time. Events of the past are constantly juxtaposed with various events of the present or of some other time in the past. For him all time blends into one sensuous experience. He makes no distinction between an event that happened only an hour before and one that occurred years ago. The memory of the episode at the branch (1898) is as recent and as vivid as an episode in 1914 or on the morning of April 1928.

Therefore, for Benjy there is no such thing as present, past and future. If Benjy waits at the gate for Caddy in 1928, it is because he had performed the same act in 1902. He is as anxious for Caddy to return in 1928 as he was in the previous years. The years that he waited in vain are non-existent to him because he remembers only those events which gave him pleasure and pain and there was none in his family including his mother to understand this problem.

If a mother fails to understand her child, no one will come forward to his rescue. Furthermore he becomes an object of ridicule in the society and even the servants bully him in all respects. Luster eats away all the cake without sparing anything for Benjy and when
Dilsey scolds him, he exploits Benjy’s inability to speak. “His hand came for another piece of cake. Dilsey hit his hand, ‘Reach it again, and I chop it right off with this here butcher knife’. Dilsey said ‘I bet he ain’t had one piece of it’. ‘Yes he is’. Luster said. ‘He already had twice as much as me. Ask him if he ain’t” (55).

Since Benjy loves watching fire, Luster teases him with a piece of wire:

A long piece of wire came across my shoulder. It went to the door, and then the fire went away. I began to cry.

When he was asked about Benjy’s Cry coolly he says, I was just trying to get him to hush up and not sturb. I ain’t touching him, Luster said. He been doing this way all day long. He needs whipping…He needs to be sent to Jackson. (72)

While a negro boy asks him, What does you do when he start belling. ‘I whips him’. Luster said’ (55)

Faulkner shows that each and every one of Compson’s family has his / her own mode of escapism. Mr. Compson through liquor, Mrs. Compson through hysterical outbursts and Quentin through suicide find their means of escape. Caddy becomes dejected with the Compson world as she grows old. She resorts to acts of sexual promiscuity to keep herself away from the falsity of the social world. Except Benjy everyone shows the proceedings of the awful family which accommodates neither love nor genuine concern.

Faulkner registers that the major blame is upon Mrs. Compson, who could have avoided the entire chaos by being a sincere and responsible mother. Instead, she strongly contributes to Compson’s doom and destruction. A mentally disabled child needs mother’s love more than any medical treatment. But Benjy finds in Mrs. Compson a weak, cold
person filled with a sense of self absorption, hypochondria and petulant whining which leaves no room for the love that the children need.

Whenever Mrs. Compson tries to help Benjy, she only causes him to bellow louder. She is incapable of understanding his needs, and refuses to offer him any love or devotion. Hence Benjy turns to Caddy for the love that his mother denies him. It appears that Benjy has instinctively knows this denial of love when he seeks the company of Caddy. Mrs. Compson never realizes that her stigmatized social ethos is only to be mocked, and ridiculed at, and not her having a mentally disabled child like Benjy. She is ready to pay attention to Jason but refuses to accept the innocent Benjy, who expects nothing but food and love from her. Benjy is ignored and belittled as an “imbecile idiot”.

Benjy is not completely an idiot as estimated by Mrs. Compson, Jason and other servants. Benjy’s great attribute is that he can sense things. Right from his childhood Benjy is able to sense moral deviation in Caddy. Even at the age of three Benjy notices Caddy’s muddy drawers and begins to cry. “Caddy was all wet and muddy behind, and I started to cry and she came and squatted in the water …Caddy smelled like trees in the rain” (17).

Caddy’s muddy drawers and Benjy’s cry are terribly significant. Her fall from the tree and the muddy drawers symbolically forewarn her sexual promiscuity. Similarly Benjy used to admire the smell of trees which stands for purity and divinity of nature in Caddy. When she starts using perfumes, Benjy with his ability to sense is able to trace the deviation in the heart of Caddy. Caddy thus loses her innocence. She turns towards artificiality leading to loss of virginity. The situation reminds us of the “Adamic fall” in the garden of Eden. Just as God who is worried about man’s loss of innocence, Benjy bemoans while looking at Caddy’s sexual deviance:
‘Oh’. She said. She put the bottle down and came and put her arms around me. ‘So that was it. And you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn’t tell her. You wanted to, but you couldn’t could you. Of course Caddy won’t of course Caddy won’t. Just wait till I dress. Caddy dressed and took up the bottle again and we went down to the kitchen. ‘Dilsey’. Caddy said, ‘Benjy’s got a present for you’. She stooped down and put the bottle in my hand. ‘Hold it out to Dilsey, now’. Caddy held my hand out and Dilsey took the bottle … Caddy smelled like trees. (40)

On an other occasion Benjy sees a young man kissing Caddy and he starts moaning:

‘I won’t, she said. ‘I won’t any more, ever. Benjy. Benjy’. Then she was crying, and I cried, and we held each other. ‘Hush’. She said. ‘Hush’. ‘won’t any more’. So I hushed and Caddy got up and we went into the kitchen and turned the light on and Caddy took the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard. Caddy smelled like trees’. (46)

As regard the perfume episode, Caddy makes everything alright by washing away her sin. As soon as she has finished washing away her clothes, she smells like trees as Benjy desires. Later on, when Caddy has lost her virginity, she avoids Benjy’s gaze because she knows that her brother is aware of her loss of virginity. In previous occasions Caddy succeeded in washing off her tainted body with kitchen soap. But this time, her stain is so intense that she feels, like Lady Macbeth, that all the perfumes of Arabia can not wash her sin away. Therefore she tries to avoid Benjy but all her attempts to avoid him only make him cry louder.

The sin separates Caddy from him. As Benjy could find not love from his parents he has turned to Caddy for the same. Thus Benjy’s obsession with Caddy’s virginity is symbolic of his desire to find something pure and unspoiled to believe in. When Caddy too fails him,
he feels frustrated. Yet his love, admiration and gratitude for Caddy have never diminished. He lives in reminiscence of Caddy.

For the Romantics, children symbolize the trailing clouds of God’s glory and Wordsworth, in particular, considered child, the father of man. Faulkner’s Benjy, whose mental make-up is that of a three years old child due to mental disability, is a moral reflector for the Compson, because he does sense moral digression. While the mother, Mrs. Compson, has failed to sense depravity in her daughter Caddy, it is being done by Benjy. Mrs. Compson’s lack of motherly understanding and instinct is being complemented by Benjy, a mentally disabled son. Even Caddy who feels guilty of her sexual promiscuity, seeks the lap of Benjy for solace and not her mother:

I could hear the clock, and I could hear Caddy standing behind me, and I could hear the roof. It’s still raining, Caddy said. I hate rain. I hate everything. And then her head came into my lap and she was crying, holding me, and I began to cry. Then I looked at the fire again and the bright, smooth shapes went again. I could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy. (69)

Thus the role of potential mother is played respectively and mutually by Caddy and Benjy. Caddy’s motherly love, affection and concern are being reciprocated promptly and aptly by Benjy. The only problem with this moral reflector is that he can not express but howl or bellow like all typical mentally disabled people. It is stated: “For the first time in Literature we are not just into the world of a retarded person but into the mind of a retarded person” (Weinstein 16).

We see the world through the eyes of Benjy. Faulkner does not use Benjy as a pawn in the plot but significant and sharp enough to stick to our guts. He makes a deeper journey
into the minds, emotions, interactions, incidents and relationships of the mentally challenged personalities and analyzes how they play a pivotal role in the debilitation of Benjy. The novel depicts that the intense and passionate emotion of a mentally disabled person is being crushed by the loveless, self-centred, and degenerate members of Compson’s family.

The fury that Benjy expresses on sensing the erosion of values personal, familial, societal and moral results in sounds. These sounds signify that being good and becoming good are important, for that alone can level the ups and downs in the life of the abled, and the differently abled. Goodness helps one to see the dignity even in the mentally disabled says Kinney:

… one can understand more of Benjy’s Sound and Fury than one had realized. It is then one begins to realize with what consummate contrapuntal skill these drivel of Benjy have been composed. (54)

It is impossible to describe the effect produced, because it is unparalleled. The thoughtful and humane reader must find it for himself. Above all Faulkner tries to exemplify that the debilitating factors imposed upon a mentally disabled person are more complex than they appear to be on the surface.

Every one wants Benjy to dance to their tunes and adjust according to their convenience and nobody bothers to understand his perception and needs. The fire which Benjy always looks at reflects his own inner burning. Faulkner depicts the doom of a mentally disabled person in the modern world where the old values of the past are meaningless, and the values of the present are destructive. Faulkner wants to show and prove how sane and evil-proof his mentally disabled protagonist is compared to the normal and so-called ‘abled people’.
Faulkner makes it clear that no ethical system or values would comprehend the feelings and special needs of a mentally disabled person. Benjy’s strong sense of love and his high integrity are never known to the mundane people because these factors do not find a place in their lives. The irony is the world of the disabled is pure and moralistic while that of the abled is so corrupt, impure and immoralistic with no room for humaneness. In a world devoid of basic human concern, mentally disabled persons like Benjy can not find any protective wings and sympathetic understanding.

People with vested mundane aspirations have neither time nor mind to treat the disabled with care and concern. Ultimately the mentally disabled persons, who are fully aware of their neglected state feel like uprooted plants, shrink and wither away. Their sounds are eloquent language only to those who have comprehended their moods and needs but to the self centred lot whose lives are governed by the stigmatized social ethos, the sounds are non-sensical and irritating.

Faulkner’s concern for the mentally disabled is shared by Salman Rushdie who probes deep into the intricate psyche of a physically disadvantaged person. He has very efficiently, eloquently and effectively projected the plights, needs and moods of this neglected lot in his *Moor’s*.

Old as a coat on a chair; and his crushed hand,
As unexpressive as a bird’s face
…………………………………………
Soul’s and body’s terrible humility,
Stripped year by year a little barer, wills
Nothing he claims no selfhood in his cry:
His body is an age that feels.

( Terence Tiller 14-20)
Great Literature is always charged with meaning, awareness and conscience, as one sees in the works of Salman Rushdie. According to Rushdie writing is self-exploration and, “... beyond self-exploration lies a sense of sacrament and may be that’s closer to how I feel: that writing fills the hole left by the departure of God” (qtd. in Hamilton 34). Through his writings Rushdie moves beyond pseudo tradition to nothingless than a reform movement. Rushdie is not a man of gutter-press stuff and one cannot help but arch his eye brows and corrugate his forehead to see the amazing boldness with which his books draw new and better maps of reality.

Rushdie’s masterpiece *The Satanic Verses* invited him death threats and a fatwa (religious edict) was issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the then supreme leader of Iran, in February 1989. Though Rushdie appeared in public sporadically, he openly and emphatically condemned the fatwa’s censoring effect on him as an author and the threat to his freedom of expression it embodied. Naguib Mahfouz, the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize in literature, criticized Khomeini for ‘intellectual terrorism’. The Nobel prize writer V.S. Naipaul described Khomeini’s Fatwa as ‘an extreme form of literary criticism’. As the criticisms, the laurels Rushdie are also heavy. From the moment Rushdie is forced into seclusion by the price placed on his life by Fatwa, it has been difficult to judge his works without all possible connections to his personal life and politics. As Ian Hamilton puts it in his valuable biographical essay “The First Life of Salman Rushdie”, “the author’s entire experience has become a factor in his writing and has a spirit of connection with his real life and politics” (Hamilton 63).

It is true that Rushdie’s works generally contain autobiographical elements and present the impact of politics. Yet Rushdie has always been concerned about giving a voice to the
voiceless. His novels rely quite extensively on portraying the travails of the disabled lot. In
his works people, ideas, language and moral principles are being turned upside down, inverted
and disfigured. And it facilitates the present study to explore the realm of disability and
challenges the readers’ conception of disability and ability, reality and illusion.

In Moor’s Rushdie exemplifies how a disabled person’s life came whirling down in
the storm of displacement, unstable identity and cultural disfiguration. This is perhaps
Rushdie’s saddest book with too many departures and pathetic yearnings, to be shaken off
lightly. The Moor or Moraes Zogoiby is the protagonist who is a skeptical, bashful and self-
loathing personality on account of congenital asthma complaint. Besides, his right hand is
deformed. Above all he does suffer from a birth defect called Werners syndrome which
means accelerated aging. This premature, exhausted, left-handed, “high-born cross-breed”
person naively tires to deal with personality disorders, and the secret identities of a
psychopathic family.

Due to Werners syndrome he is doomed to go through his life at double speed as
though: “Back at my back I always hear / Time’s winged chariot hurrying near”
(Marvell 22-23). He is aged thirty-six but is with the physique of a seventy-two-years old.
He narrates the fantastic story of his life, in a family, which exemplifies the glorious plurality
of India. The Moor’s mother Aurora is India’s greatest artist, who comes from a Portuguese
line which descended on the illegitimate generation of Vasco da Gama. His father Abraham
is one of the ancient communities of Cochin Jew who has also descended from the wrong side
of Boabdil. Boabdil is the last Moorish Sultan of Granada, expelled from Spain in 1492 by
Ferdinand and Isabella. The fort from which Boabdil gazed for the last time at Granada is
today a tourist attraction, known as ‘The Last Sigh of the Moor’, from which the novel takes
its title. Boabdil’s descendents who made their way to Southern India took as their family
name, his nick name “Zogoiby” which means ‘the unfortunate’. The Moor like his ancestor Boabdil looks back at the end of his life upon his brilliant, ruined family and India with its glory and genuine ethos. India is a lost paradise of possibilities to this disabled cross-breed which has been squandered by the human sins of ego, hatred, factionalism, ethnic and religious intolerance.

The Moor is debilitated genetically, domestically socially, culturally and politically too. The disharmony and tension of the Moor stems from his genetic disorder. At the age of thirty-six, what ought to be the middle path way of his life, has become the end of the road with the physical appearance of seventy two. He has lived too fast:

… like a marathon runner collapsing because he failed to pace himself, like a suffocating astronaut who danced too merrily on the Moon, in my overheated years I used up a full lifespan’s air-supply. O wastrel Moor! To spend, in just thirty-six years, your allotment of three score-and-twelve. (53)

The Moor introduces himself with his opening sentence which describes his genetical disorder. And like Shakespearean plays, the remarks strikes the key note of the novel right on the first Page: “I have lost count of the days that have passed … ran from death under cover of darkness and left a message nailed to the door” (1). The careful collocation reveals symbolically the plight of the disabled community. ‘I have lost count of the days’ exhibits the vagueness, disinterestedness and meaninglessness in the life of a disabled person. The expression ‘Passed’ expresses the diminutive power and the lack of control that a disabled person experiences in his life. The verb “ran” exemplifies the restless running of an individual to find fulfilment in life. ‘Death’ explains the ever vulnerable condition of their life. ‘Darkness’ conveys the gloom that permeates through their future. ‘Message’ refers to the unrevealed vitriolic biting of the society. ‘Nailed to the door’ suggests Martin Luther’s
nailing of ninety five these is to the church door in Wittenberg and Christ’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Probably the Moor intends to voice out the story of a voiceless community and calls for a reformation. Life itself being crucifixion, the state of Moor is:

All wretched and forlorn,

... Whose aged step

Seemed weary, worn with care,

His face furrow’d o’er with years,

And hoary was his hair ....

Thro’ weary life this lesson learn,

That man was made to mourn. (Blake 6-10, 46-48)

Depressed and oppressed by both family and society the Moor feels that the last phase of his life needs to be informed to the listeners so that they will realize the significance of his last sigh:

A Moor’s tale, complete with sound and fury. You want? Well, even if you don’t … It is meet to sing of endings; of what was, and may be no longer; what was right in it, and wrong. A last sigh for a lost world, a tear for its passing. (4)

Though he is the most beautiful of all the kids of Aurora, he is also the stigma of the family. Aurora tries in vain to control and console herself after seeing the right hand of the new born child – the fingers welded into an undifferentiated chunk, the thumb a stunted wart. According to her, “…a physical abnormality was only one notch lower than mental illness on the scale of family shame” (146).

Aurora used to swaddle the baby in white. To muffle the baby is not an act of concern but to conceal its disfigured hand. There is a similarly between Mrs. Compson in sound and
Aurora in Moor’s. Mrs. Compson’s act of safeguarding Benjy from foul weather is only to keep herself away from any physical inconvenience and not out of her concern for the health of Benjy. Aurora’s act of swaddling the baby arises out of her stigmatized social ethos and mental inconvenience and not due to her concern for the baby. It is the attitude of the society that troubles her a lot and not the helpless condition or exigency of the child.

Charlie’s mother in Flowers hated her mentally disabled son saying that he is a cross on them. Benjy’s mother in Sound detested her mentally deformed son saying that he is her judgment. Aurora is not an exception, “… saw my crippled hand, my ageing, as a judgment upon them – a deformed child born of a stunted love, half a life born of a marriage that was no longer whole” (223).

The need of the Society is not the Mothers who bemoan over their misfortune or loathe the innocent child who is no way responsible for his misshapen physique, or a mother who dolefully complaints about the loss of family prestige. Every society needs brave, considerate and thoughtful mothers. Mothers are not expected to feel sorry about the helpless or the disabled children. They should never hate them because the disabled are not responsible for their disability. Mother of a disabled child is a unique person who can make or mar the future of her defaced child.

The mothers of all disabled children should have the awareness that, “A man’s weakness is his strength, and vice versa… Would Achilles have been a great warrior without his heel?” (155). Therefore by trying to assuage the feeling of being alone in the universe, the mother can trigger the confidence level of the disabled child, and help him to cope with his disability which will pave way for bright future. Mothers of the disabled children should have the basic understanding that “even a great masterpiece can have a little smudge” (147).
Aurora with her bombastic and adamant temperament always tries to impose her likes and dislikes upon her son and she never stoops to understand him. Being “confident of her genius, armed with a tongue as merciless as her beauty and as violent as her work, she excluded nobody from her coloratura damnations” (171). She, like her grandmother Epifania, is formidable, she is “most severe and least forgiving of mothers” (32) and has dismissed the Moor for his love affair with Uma.

Outwardly being perfect, Aurora in her childhood is depicted as mutinous, inventively vicious prankster at odds with her grandmother Epifania. Aurora relishes Epifania’s torment by admitting mosquitoes inside her room by night. Her favourite hobby is to irritate her uncle Aires and father Cameons by committing acts of petty thievery and vandalism. It is obvious that Aurora’s sadism, indomitable ego and will power are her second skin. It is this quality of Aurora which prevents her from saving the life of her grandmother who curses: “May your house be forever partitioned, may its foundations turn to dust, may your children rise up against you, and may you fall be hard” (99).

Raised in a household divided emotionally and physically between warring family factions and neglected by her business magnet mother; Belle da Gama, Auror’s haughtiness, domination and derision have become her identity. The Moor, born much later and more beautiful than his three sisters, is favoured and coddled by Aurora, because of his defective right hand and accelerated growth, but still victimized by her pseudo social ethos. Aurora is possessed with the sympathy of an average mother, but she miserably lacks the empathy – the much needed quality of a deformed child’s mother.

At times Aurora even lacks the patience and compassion of an average mother too. Arts and active participation in a national party demand much of her time and often she regrets, “… as for these savage creatures, they can’t grow up fast enough for me. God! How
long this childhood business draggoes on! Why couldn’t have kids – why not even one child
grew up really fast” (141).

India is hailed as ‘Mother Land’. Even rivers are named after women denoting their
generosity and impartiality. In such a country women are stated to attain their fulfilment only
in ‘motherhood’. But if any mother who considers her motherhood cumbersome or the birth
of a physically challenged child is considered an encumbrance by the mother she needs to be
sensitized.

It is important to notice that Aurora finds it frustrating and dragging to up-bring a
normal child, with surplus money and innumerable errand boys. It seems Aurora’s wish has
come true, God has responded to her lament and granted her a child who would outgrow
childhood more swiftly than the girls and the net result is a “beautiful child man and a human
time-rocket” (174). Ironically the Moor puts it,

Reader listen carefully, take in everyword, for what I write now is the simple
and literal truth, I, Moraes Zogiby, known as Moor, am – for my sins, for my
many and many sins, for my fault, for my most grievous fault – a man
living double quick. (143)

The society considers the disabled as unfortunate. The disabled too are of the opinion
that their Karma or Fate or Sin is responsible for their disability. The Moor does feel the
same. Even the learned physicians are no exceptions in shattering the sentiments of the Moor
by equating his disability to Karma:

And in the end, after every effort, the slow inevitable shaking of
the eminent stethoscoped head of some boss-devil (doctor), the upturned-palm
gestures of helplessness, the murmurs about Karma, Kismet, Fate. (162)
Nothing under the sun can be more barbaric than belittling a deformed person under the banner of ‘Karmic unfortunates’, who are not responsible for their “misshapen condition”. Like Charlie of *Flowers*, Moor is the butt of ridicule as well as specimen object. He is a Speci-Man child for medical practitioners, Ayurvedic Specialists, Tibia College Professors, Faith-healers, Saints and Quacks. For a long time the Moor remembers those days with bitterness and resents his mother for the hoops she has put him through:

To this day the words ‘Breach Candy Hospital’ conjure up, for me, the memory of a sort of house of correction, a benevolent torture chamber, a zone of infernal torments run by well-meaning demons who mortified me – who roasted me who tikka-kababed and Bombay-ducked me – for my own good. (162)

Moor has an astonishing size, six foot six in a country where the average male rarely grows above five foot five and therefore he was subjected to repeated scrutiny. The enlarged feet, the fast growing hair and the constant pain in the knees do not help him. He feels:

… like a jet-setter right down to my genes, I burned-having no option the candle at both ends … I have been a traveller caught in a flesh-and - blood time machine, perpetually out of breath, because I have been running faster than the years, in spite of painful knees. (161)

Without time for proper planning, without any pause to learn from his experiences or mistakes, and without any time for reflection, he has become nothing but a mess. Often he oscillates between the idea whether he is young or old. The Moor’s condition is similar to the one depicted by Arlon in his poem:

They say that I’m too young

To cross the street to play,
That I’m too old to cry
When I don’t get my way,
That I’m much too big
To swing on the garden gate,
But very much too small
To stay up after eight.
I’m young, I’m old, I’m big, I’m small –
Do you think, in age and height,
I will ever grow to be
Just exactly right? (1-11).

Another awful tragedy is that his physical development is not compatible with his emotional development. The bitter consequence is the loss of irreparable blissful childhood.

And to blossom into a handsome young man when in reality I was still a child was in fact a double curse. It first denied me the natural fruit of childhood, the smallness, the childishness of being a child, and then departed, so that by the time I had indeed become a man I no longer possessed the golden-apple beauty of youth. (162)

Nothing can be crueler than sacrificing childhood, or the “childishness of being a child” (174). It is like falling, suicide, and death. “A melancholy shadow of puzzlement” (174) has mystified him, when his father has brought him absurdly tiny clothes that would be perfect for a child of his age, but too small for him.

The same darkening violence within him peeps out, when his father offers him books, that a young man of his size might enjoy, but books that utterly baffle the child who dwelt
within his outsized flesh. His double promotion has in truth usurped him of the glorious youthful prime. He regrets to:

........................................

see him on the edge of life,

With cares and sorrows worn,

Then Age and want-oh! ill-matched pair –

Shew man was made to mourn. (Burns 37-40)

It is from these walls, that the Moor has learned how profoundly ‘childhood’ is the root of a man’s normality, and he has been longing for that normalcy.

I never thought of myself as a super-hero, don’t get me wrong, but with my hand like a club and my personal calendar losing pages at super speed I was exceptional all right, and has no desire to be … By the age of seven-and-a-half … I was a child trapped in the six-foot-six body of a twenty-year-old giant, and possessed, from these early moments of consciousness, by a terror of running out of time. (152)

He is the butt of the family as well as society. His nick-name is ‘Slomo’ (Short form of slow motion) in his family and his sister Mynah derives maximum pleasure in nothing but imitating his slow motion, and “Moon-walking impersonations of his half-paced mannerisms” (153).

What is hard to overcome is the feeling of being in the house of arts, surrounded by makers of beauty, both resident and visiting, and knowing that such making must remain a closed book in his life. He longs to have the life of normal people who are:

Blest, who can unconcern’dly find

Hours, days, and years slide soft away,

In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day. ( Pope 9-12 )

The wider his physical boundaries, the more limited are the horizon of his mobility. He has become “a one-man population explosion, a megalopolis, a shirt-ripping, button – popping Hulk” ( 188 ). His eldest sister Ina marvelled at when he reached his full heft and height,

Look at you! You have become Mr. Gulliver Travel and we are your Lilliputs’. Which was true at least in this respect: that if our Bombay was my personal not – Raj – but – Lilli – putana, then my great size was indeed succeeding in tying me down. ( 188 )

Moor’s is a life without the stage of childhood, without friends, and without school. The charm and pleasure of schooling is denied to him due to his surprising size and appearance. Physically he is too old for KG and mentally he is too young for junior school – ‘abnormal’ for KG and ‘sub-normal’ for junior school. So he has to be home schooled for:

“Education forms the common mind … Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined …” ( qtd.in Ability 18 ). It is a known fact that for every child, school is that crucial point of all that constitutes life and living. More so, for a child with disability, school is a stepping stone where isolation ends, inclusion begins and peer group acceptance prevails.

Moor’s poses the question whether or not we do adhere to the Indian constitution article 46 which affirms that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people, or the article 45 which emphasizes that the state shall endeavour to provide within the period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years. The disabled child does have a positive feeling that he can enjoy the wealth of education if an opportunity is given to him. But educators and parents do
not have a hopeful mind set up. Thus the “cannot do” mind set up prevails not in the mind of the child with disability, but in the minds of the educator, and parents too.

There is none in this world (where appearance becomes reality) to understand the unique problem of the Moor. Soon he has become an honorary grown up, spoken to and treated as such by one and all, completely excluded from the world to which he belongs. The major travail of a deformed person – the sexual exploitation – creeps in his life too in the form of his female tutor Dilly Hormuz.

‘Ten years old men’, She said softly the first time we were alone. ‘Man cub, you are the eighth wonder and no mistake’ … my younger self, in that appalling monster in whom a child’s mind peered out in confusion through the portals of a young man’s beautiful body … my teacher Miss Hormus found a kind of personal liberation, understanding that I was hers to command as a child and also – hers to touch and be touched by as a man. (190)

Money and motherless atmosphere play a major role in shaping the destiny of deformed people. While in the case of Lennie in *Mice* it is money that shatters his life, it is surplus money and scanty love that devastate Moor’s life. It is deplorable that the children of the rich are always raised by the poor, since both the parents are running after money. The forgotten fact is that money is essential for life, but it is not the essence of life. The root cause for all problems of both the abled and the disabled children is that they are left alone in the custody of servants or baby-sitters who instead of perceiving the child as an ‘infant’ consider it an ‘enfant terrible’. The percentage of love, concern and protection required is more in the case of a deformed child like Moor.

By nature a mother is designed to complement the deformity of a child. In the case of Moor it is not so. His mother adds to his sorrow. Instead of love, she shows him indifference.
Therefore the Moor questions the existence of a loving, selfless mother. The absence of an affectionate mother makes him articulate his agony over the inhumanity of humanity like Wordsworth: “If this belief from heaven be sent, / If such be nature’s holy plan, / Have I not reason to lament?” (14-15). Aurora, the mother, instead of bridging his physical and emotional gap with her heartwarming physical presence, abundant love and protective care, widens the gap either by her absence or by irrational romanticization of his deformity.

… when we sat in her studio as artist and model, Aurora told me constantly that I must not think of myself as the victim of an incurable premature – ageing disorder, but a magic child, a time traveler…

‘Baby mine, you just startofied out going too fast. May be you’ll just take off, and zoom – o right out of this life. (210)

The intense tragedy of Moor has been transformed into cheap fantasy in the hands of Aurora. A mother, with her motherly instinct, ought to have anticipated the sexual abuse of the child of this rare configuration and averted the tragedy. But Aurora, who is known for her art and artifice, neither averts nor understands the deep groin of Moor:

The memory of that time remains a breathless ache, it makes my heart pound, it is a wound that doesn’t heal, for my body knew what I did not, and the child sat half – bewildered in the prison of his flesh. (190)

When the issue has been brought to her knowledge, she only dismisses the tutor and never prefers to stay back at home as a moral support, and erase the emotional commotion of the Moor.

Aurora herself has experienced the pains of a neglected child during her early life. The novelist states: “What is probably true is that Aurora began her life in art during those
long motherless hours” (45). When Bella her mother, is on the razzle, little Aurora is left to her long hours in her surreally cloven home. The children of Aurora undergo the same agony of the deprival of mother’s love, affection and the plight of a desolated child. Thus the history of Aurora repeats itself. Moor’s also explores the myth that only the poor, deserted and deformed children become victims of sexual exploitation. So:

…think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest:
But Oh! What crowds in ev’ry land,
All wretched and forlorn,
Thro’ weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn. (Burns 43-48)

Moor’s also deconstructs the myth that deformed children are sexually abused only by strangers. The most horrible and unpalatable fact in the case of the Moor is sexual abuse that starts from his family members. The dreadful secret of his early days passed on to the Moor by the ayah (Servant maid) is breath-taking: “Your family Perverts. Your sisters and mother also. In your baby time. How they played with you. Too sick” (197).

Though he wholeheartedly wishes that it should be a foul lie uttered by the ayah, in his hearts of heart he shrinks due to this revelation of the perverse nature of his people. Moor is haunted by the truth:

Human perversity is greater than human heroism… There are limits to these things, there are points beyond which we will not go in their names; but to perversity there is no limit set, no frontier that anyone has found. What ever today’s excess, tomorrows will exceed-o it. (124)
Added to the pain of accelerated growth and sexual exploitation, the pain of being a left handed person too has haunted him all along. To the maximum he avoids public visits and under unavoidable circumstances he lags behind a little, lowering his head to avoid people’s eyes:

… jamming my right hand deep into my trousers, and kicking at the turf for shame; because of course I could hear the whispers and giggles of matriarchs and the young beauties of Bombay …O catch him … Misshapen … freaky … Some peculiar disorder … I hear they keep him locked up … such a shame on the house … Almost like an idiot, they say … And his poor father’s only son. Thus did the oily tongue of gossip lubricate the wheel of scandal. (240)

The irrational and inhumane comments damage the sentiments and confidence of a defaced person. Though human beings boast that they are ‘the Crown of creation’, they continue to be barbarians and murderers of heart if not body. One does moan along with Wordsworth:

To her fair works did Nature link

The human soul that through me ran;

And much it grieved my heart to think

What man has made of man. (5-8)

Gossip - the crude weapon of mankind, many times cut the tap root of hope and happiness in the life of many a human being. For instance, the Moor says: “To this day, when I shake hands I offer my unexceptional left, inverted, the thumb pointing towards the floor…” (132). But his friendly handshake is always received by the society with a sarcastic curve in mouth. Unable to face the society’s mockery, he chides science and medicine for its
inability to solve his problem. The Moor is shattered to the core by the piercing vitriolic
criticism and has cultivated a deep sense of inferiority complex which drives him to think of
himself as “… a sort of social idiot served by my nature from the everyday, made strange by
fate” (240). The peak of his agony and helplessness is obvious when he says:

South paw, Sinister, Cuddy-wiftie, Keggy – fistie, Corrie – paw: what

a vocabulary of denigration clusters around left – handedness! What an

infinity of small humiliations await the non-doxtrous round every

corner... A left handed cricketer being a valued, member of any

middle order, will have no trouble finding a bat to suit him; but in all

the hockey mad land of India, there is no such creature as a wrong–

way hockey–stick … and if life is hard for ‘natural’ left handers, how

much harder it was for me. (153)

The call of the outdoors that lures every human being is always denied to disabled

people either by their family members or they themselves shun those occasions due to their

inferiority complex. Sleep is the only outlet or an escape for all those who suffer from mental

aberration. While sleeping, the deprived self feels:

When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,

And look upon myself, and curse my fate. (Shakespeare 1-4)

The Moor has inherited the family’s gift for sleep. He states: “All of us slept like

babies when sadness or trouble loomed” (164). Whenever the Moor feels sick at heart, he

would lie down and close himself rather switch himself off like a light with the hope to open

in a better frame of mind. But usually it ended up as ‘Sleeping, waking and weeping’. His
sleep-therapy does not always work. Many times in the middle of the night he would awake and weep:

... I would cry out pitifully for love. The shakes, the sobs came from a place too deep within to be identifiable. In time I accepted these nocturnal tears, too, as the penalty I had to pay for being exceptional; though as I have said I had no desire for exceptionality (164).

One is shocked and dumb fold to see the Moor’s longing to be recognized as a ‘normal person’ by the society. But, ironically it never happens in his life span.

Added to the debilitating factors like lack of maternal love and care, lampoon of the society and sexual exploitation, the fact that collapsed the Moor most is the infidelity of his parents, which amounts to family heritage. It is quite tragic that Aurora who is worried about her son’s deformity hardly bothers about her cultural deformity. Aurora’s is a razzle-oriented world where the cultural deformity can be compensated with currencies. Always the action of the parents has its repercussions upon their children and consequently, in this novel, the sins of the elders seem to have descended on the Moor.

The gruesome feeling of his parents’ infidelity terribly disturbs the Moor like grit in the eye and he says: “So in writing this, I must peel off history, the prison of the past. It is time for a sort of ending, for the truth about myself to struggle out, at last, from under my parents’ stifling…” (136). No wonder the Moor is tormented by depression. It is a natural feeling that comes when one is physically ill and one’s scope is limited even in the usual activities of daily life. The Moor finds major difficulties in social interaction. Doctors say:

Depression may be seen as a condition that causes enormous misery both to the individual and to the near and dear, leading to a major disruption in the lives of the people involved. Sleep disturbance, poor
appetite, or a disinclination to participate in any pleasure seeking activity, and all pervasive depressed mood, negative thinking and low self esteem are some of the symptoms of depression.

( Pross 61 )

The insincerity of the Moor’s parents’ is yet another reason for his depression. With regard to their mutual infidelity, Aurora and her husband Abe (Abreham) are made for each other. While Aurora has three simultaneous paramours, Abe’s world is engulfed by innumerable prostitutes whom he imports to the city. For the first time the Moor is exposed to the beat-nik heritage of his family through his lady love Uma Saraswathi. She lists out that his:

…father is up to here in dirty business and under-age tarts?
And … (his) mother-forgive me, my love, but you must know it - is currently having not one, not two, but three different love affairs? …
Number one, that Parsi retard Kekoo Mody, number two Vasco Miranda the fat fraud, and the worse is number three: that MA bastard Mainduck Raman Fielding! ( 256 )

The illegitimacy of the family inflicts pain on him.

When his own speculations linger more and more on the similar rumours about a popular politician and his mother, he feels miserable. He considers himself an epitome of shame, since he is the illegitimate descent of a great lineage. Neither can he feel proud of his great lineage nor can he escape from the shame of illegitimacy. “But there was no where to run, no where to hide. There was only what had to be done” ( 331 ).

Marital infidelity occurs on account of the frailty of an individual. Beside, immorality is also very much seen in the blood of the ancestors who are supposed to be virtuous rulers to
be emulated. Aurora hails from the illegitimate descent of Portugese Vasco-da Gama, where as Abraham is illegitimate descent of the last Moor of Granada, whose Jewish, thieving mistress … After years by his side, this anonymous ancestor crept away from crumbling Boabdil, and took ship for India, with a great treasure in her baggage and a male child in her belly; from whom after many begets, came Abraham himself. ( 82 )

From the moment he comes to know that he is the outcome of “a bastard Moor and a bastard portugee” ( 83 ), the intensity of his schizoid personality disorder increases. To add fuel to the fire, the Moor is given to knowledge that his maternal grandmother, who has a flavour for business during day time and a secret desire for wild hunting during night, is solely responsible for the sudden demise of his grandfather.

The major chunk of the novel describes this ‘legacy of infidelity’ which is the root cause for his schizophrenia disorder. Our thoughts, moods and actions are closely linked with each other and together they make up the ‘coherent’ individuals that we are. In schizophrenia, however, the vital links between these three components is missing, causing a person to think in one way and act in an altogether different way.

Schizophrenics often suffer from hallucinations, particularly auditory in nature. They have a constant fear that the world at large is either following them, or discussing them. They thus look inward for protection, avoid company and gradually move to a world of total isolation. ( Pross 73 )

Neither the artistic talent nor the astonishing beauty of his mother, who is the cynosure in Bombay, offers any contentment to Moor, but is always haunted by the ‘Stigma’ of his mother. Now he is out of the mysterious puzzles of all Wh-questions pertaining to his mother.
Once the Moor understands the true colour of his mother estrangement takes place.

Perceiving the nature of their mother, all the children equally cut away their umbilical cord relationship: “Aurora lost them all, you know, they all found, ways of leaving her, though they loved her bitterly, loved her more passionately than she could love them back, loved her harder than, in the absence of reciprocating love …” (207).

Moor especially, without his mother’s due love and affection, has become a bungle and is “doomed to thumble” (172). Her domination and indifference paved way for the travails of his childhood days, yet she is irresistible. The reason is:

If she trampled over us, it was because we lay down willingly beneath her spurred - and – booted feet; If she excoriated us at night, it was on account of our delight at the sweet lashings of her tongue … We were all her slaves, and she made our servitude feel like paradise. (172)

Like Coleridge’s “willing suspension of disbelief”, she has made her family members willingly suspend their rational thinking, self dignity, freedom and individuality. Aurora deliberately entertains a dissident mind setup and Abraham accepts her subserviently because servitude is like paradise:

From now on I will always look after you’ my father told my mother after the first time they made love. But she was beginning to be an artist, she answered, ‘the most important part of me, I can take care of myself’. ‘Then’, said Abraham, humbly, ‘I will look after the less important part, the part that needs to eat, enjoy and rest’. (91)

Once, Abraham asks Vasco Miranda to make a portrait of his wife. The licentiousness of Aurora has given Miranda the guts to depict her, sitting cross-legged on a giant lizard, exposing her full left breast big and heavy with motherhood. When Abraham roars Miranda
retorts coolly, “A canvas is not a mirror to reflect a goo-goo smile. I have seen what I have seen: a presence and an absence - a fullness and an emptiness” (158). Since Vasco is the voice of her secret identity, she overlooks all his excesses.

It is this dissident nature that makes Aurora not to bother about having a formal marriage till her last breath. The bishop of Cochin has refused to countenance the idea of Abraham’s conversion, and Moshe Cohen the leader of the Cochin Jews declares that under no circumstances could any Jewish marriage be performed. When Aurora goes and settles in Bombay, she calls herself Mrs. Aurora Zogoiby and makes her status famous without wedding bells. Aurora’s defiance to marriage and all the socially accepted and appreciated norms always has its impact upon the Moor:

I, however, was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew. I was both, and nothing: a jewholic – anonymous, a cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. I was – what’s the word these days? – atomized. Yessir : a real Bombay mix. Bastard : I like the sound of the word. Baas, a smell, a stinky-poo. Turd, no translation required. Ergo, Bastard, a smelly shit; like for example, me” (104).

Aurora’s infidelity is the major reason for her failure to perform the role of a dutiful mother to a deformed child. The Moor recalls, “… but on that occasion she, my mother, instead of- when I fully expected, -she turned on me, and just when I needed her most, she– against her own flesh and blood” (90). This sobbing of the Moor brings to one’s mind the bemoaning of Charlie in Flowers, regarding the loss of his mother’s love.

Dejected and depressed by the negligence of his mother’s love, the Moor turns towards his father for compassion and compensation. To his great shock he finds that Abraham’s derigueur decency is on par with Aurora’s defiance to morality. The constant
belittlement and vindictiveness from Aurora’s side have made Abey evolve as a “fit, mentally agile, sexually active” (317), desperado, and a scheming tycoon. From humble beginning he rose to Edenic heights from which “like an icy deity, Abraham brought havoc upon the mere mortals below” (417).

On the domestic side Abraham is an ineffectual angel beating his wings in the void. Within months of his arrival at Bombay he succeeds in flesh trade. It is true that initially Abraham hugs his son with comforting words and deeds. But the way of the world changes him and hence he becomes formidable and dangerously cold to his son. This is a “you too….” shock for the Moor and being unable to digest his parents’ true colour he bursts out, “Children never understand why parents act as they do … Children make fictions of their fathers, re-inventing them according to their childish needs. The reality of a father is a weight few sons can bear” (339).

Later when the Moor comes to know about his father’s involvement in racial killing, leading to the death of his own daughter, his role as a murderer of his mother and his underground dealings in drug business making the Moor a scapegoat in the prison, it all makes him deeply hurt, shattered, distressed and disillusioned. The Moor recalls:

In cold blood: the phrase never fitted anyone so well as Abraham Zogoiby…Like superman, I had been given the gift of x-ray vision;

unlike superman, and it had shown me that my father was the most evil man that ever lived. (163)

In the case of Moor, a deformed person, parental love, protection and guidance are only an illusion. A slight relief from the double edged weapon of “parental bizarreries” (147) for the Moor is through their household servants, one is Vasco Miranda, the interior decorator of the house. The other two are Ezekiel, the cook, and Lambajan, the gate keeper.
Of the three, it is Vasco Miranda, a crackpot and one of the paramours of his mother, who has taught the Moor to analyze: “Was weeping such a weakness? He wondered. Was defending to the death such strength?” (80).

Vasco Miranda taught the Moor to face the brute to live until death, by means of his imaginary third hand from his heart. When the Moor was very young Vasco Miranda would creep into his bedroom and change the cartoon pictures on the wall. For a long time the Moor entertained the idea that after he falls asleep the pictorial fantasy creatures assume life, engage him in his dream and finally make him happy. But Vasco gives him a different explanation:

‘You are changing the room’, he whispered to me one night. ‘It is you. You did it in your sleep, with this third hand’. He pointed in the direction of my heart… ‘the hand you can see clearly in your dreams’. (154)

The Moor loves Miranda for the gift of the ‘dream-hand’ which sowed seeds of confidence in his heart.

This seed of confidence sprouts out during his long hours of apprenticeship in the hands of his cook Ezekiel. Ezekiel has taught him how to do with one hand what he had been doing with two, and has also equipped him with recipes of East and West. Miranda has introduced to him a ‘dream hand’ or the third hand. Ezekiel has enabled him to manage with one hand. But it is Lambajan who has activated his deformed right hand.

Once in a week, throughout the period of the Moor’s childhood, Lambajan used to come to the garden of Elephanta (name of the house) carrying long strips of rag with which he would bandage the Moor’s deformed right hand. Pointing out to his hairy chin he would say, “Right there baba, land your super bomb” (195). The Moor gratefully acknowledges, “…
only that while Lambajan had shown me a little of my club-hand right mitt’s true potential, I had not yet discovered my vocation. My sword still slept in my hands” (241). This is how the Moor has discovered that his crippled right hand is to be reckoned with, “a torpedo, a fist of fists” (195). Ultimately Lambajan’s prompting and prophetic words, “you’re going to knock the whole world flat with a fist on you like that” (194) come true.

Though this planet is filled with myriad human souls, it is the mother’s heart in which one ultimately longs to get a shelter – a shelter which is encouraging, guiding, guarding and fulfilling the needs of one’s life. The Moor longs to have a shelter in his mother’s heart, but Aurora fails to provide that fulfilment to Moor by sticking on to her bizarre behaviour.

It is said and believed in every culture that if one door is closed, another door is open. In the case of the Moor, not one door but three doors in three different ways help him overcome all inadequacies. The novel focuses on the dormant skill of a disabled person, which given an opportunity blossoms brightly. A right word of encouragement at the right time will enable a disabled person to achieve wonders. In the case of the Moor his inherent talent is brought to lime light by the servants. It ought to have been done either by Aurora or Abraham. But they do not do so.

The novel highlights the irresponsible, self-centred parentage, their marital infidelities and its terrible impact upon the disabled children. Apart from the pain of being ugly, malformed, and a freak by nature, the fact that haunts the Moor most is the shame of family infidelity. He acknowledges: “What was hardest of all was the sense of being an embarrassment, a shame” (154).

The Moor feels giddy, disoriented and lost. He utters: “I was nobody, nothing … I had been made into a nowhere-and-no-community man.” (336). Pross explores how, “… the ill body disrupts one’s sense of identity and obliges the subject to rephrase his/ her own
definition” (14). The Moor eagerly waits for the right moment to rephrase himself from the ‘deformed son of Aurora’ to somebody else.

It is at this period Uma, “the woman who transformed, exalted and ruined his life” (237) has enters into his life. The Moor is swept away and feels committed. He ruminates: “The crime of falling into delirious love with a woman”, whom his mother disapproved. Beside, “To be cut off the family tree, like a dead branch” (278) is painful to the Moor. The shameful descent, disgusting deformity, the absence of parental love, and the inability to lead a settled life like an ordinary being, make the Moor a vulnerable prey to the deceitful Uma Saraswathi. Like the displeased lover in Wyatt’s Sonnet the Moor also feels the sense of discontentment:

I love another, and thus I hate myself;
I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain.
Likewise displeaseth me both death and life,
And my delight is causer of this strife. (11-14)

Like the Venetian Moor Othello, the Indian Moor too entertains a sense of credulity, which deprives him the art of understanding men and matters. It is the same credulity that prevents him from getting the true picture of either his parents or his lover Uma. He like jungle animals does not understand, “…the true nature of the trees among which they have their daily being …whether the trees are healthy or corroded, whether they harbour demons or good spirits” (319).

Aurora out of her “maternal jealousy” (247) warns her son about the bold and brutally beautiful Uma, who is expelled by her parents because of her promiscuous behaviour. She informs her son: “She is a blood sucker lizard who loves your blood, not you. She will suck you like mango and throw away the stone” (263).
For the first time the Moor receives a good counseling from his mother, but it becomes ineffective because physical love is more powerful than parental concern. A detective, who has been hired by suspicious Aurora, comes out with the proof that Uma is a married woman and has clandestine affairs with Moor’s brother-in-law and his father too. The Moor’s oscillation is aptly revealed in the following lines:

That night I sat alone in my room, unable to eat. It was plain that I had a choice to make. If I chose Uma, I would have to break away from my mother, probably for good. But if I accepted Aurora’s evidence – and in the privacy of my own four walls … Could I face my strange, dark fate alone. ( 267 )

Like Mark Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* the Moor oscillates like a simple pendulum between maternal advice and personal love. But such is the power of love that this pendulum swings more often to the side of love than to the side of his mother. Rushdie narrates: “Of the three pillars of life, God, family and money, he had only one and needed a minimum of two” ( 318 ).

The novel projects the oscillation and dilemma of a deformed person in entering into conjugal life. The deformed person hardly finds any resting point at all. The fear that he may be rejected by women constantly disturbs him. To be designated as unfit or a mismatch in conjugal life is quite unbearable to him. The Moor is fabulously rich but girls consider his minus factors. In other words, in addition to money, beauty or appearance matters. Though appearance is deceptive shallow women give importance to external factors.

The result is the lives of the rich end up with undeserving life partners and the poor turn out to be eternal bachelors / spinsters. The Moor’s own world has been in flames. While he tries to leap out of it, he pathetically lands in the midst of it. The Moor is three times
unlucky, or three times removed from the realm of joy. The world of the Moor characterized by physical deformity, cultural erosion and parental infidelity has been on flames.

For a short span of time, the Moor maintains his affinity with Uma without the knowledge of Aurora. But Uma, with her multiple selves, from her highly inventive self to the infinite malleability of the real, proves herself to be the Moor’s “Nemesis and foe beyond her grave” (217). Being money maniac and a woman of loose morality, Uma decides to take revenge upon Aurora who stands as an obstacle to their marriage. She maliciously hands over an audio cassette to Aurora in which she has deliberately recorded the Moor’s angry, awful, lustful words, he spoke at the time of their sexual intimacy, as a necessary means to achieve her end. The Moor recollects the situation and regrets:

‘Your mummy-daddy must accept us ...’ ‘she won’t’... with what seduction she led me down that road, eliciting the fatal phrase by making me think they were what she needed to hear! (fuck my mother) … And then continued these dark murmers, because in our love making her, my lover, asked-how often she asked – that I tell her those things, to hear – O most false! O foully false and falsely foul! (320).

Uma is a gratuitous liar and she is good at changing roles or striking while the iron is hot. Under the pretext of convincing the Moor’s parents, she goes to Elephanta and hands over the cassette to Aurora “disguising her errand of hate as a pilgrimage of love” (321). The Moor with his characteristic credulity trusts her, adores her and considers himself to be gifted: “to have her maturity, her serenity, her worldly wisdom, her strength, her love” (258) in this treacherous world.

Uma’s villainy extends in such a manner that she edits the tape which makes Aurora think that his son is harbouring the forbidden Oedipal desire. Though Aurora is aware of the
harmful nature of Uma, she easily falls into her well-laid traps for she has lost her sense of
discretion after the sudden death of her eldest daughter. Like the indiscrete old Lear she
banishes the Moor from the kingdom of love.

‘From this moment on’, said Aurora Zogoiby, ‘you are no longer our
son. All steps to disinherit you have been put in place. You have one
day in which to collect your effects and get out. Your father and I
never wish to see you again’. ‘I support your mother fully’ said
Abraham Zogoiby. ‘you disgust us. Now get out of our sight’. (278).

The Moor without knowing the reason for his banishment feels crestfallen. Aurora’s
prediction of Uma’s gullibility comes true as she has already cautioned her son stating “That
little fisher woman has her hook in you and like a stupid fish you think she only wants to play.
Soon you will be out of water and she will fry you…” (246). In spite of this, he
continues to seek her love. Besides, the Moor is also unaware of the tape episode.
Meanwhile things take a different turn.

Aurora does not permit the Moor to marry Uma. So Uma’s hidden agenda that she can
poison the Moor after marriage in order to solely enjoy the entire wealth of him, does not
materialize. Therefore, convincingly she puts forth another plan stating that the lovers must
die together as they are not allowed to live together. Uma secretly produces two pills—one is
poisonous and the other is filled with sleeping dose. She intends to give the Moor the former
and retains the latter for her. But as the wages of sin is death, she happens to swallow the
poison pill.

Only after six years of Aurora’s death the Moor gets the chance of knowing the
reason. While listening the cassette, he feels as if “he is subjected to dissection without
anaesthesia” (278). The novel focuses on how a deformed person due to his inferiority
complex, and fear of future can stick on to his dissident mind set up and end up in wrong choice. If Aurora had taken a bit of pain, she would have understood the villainy of Uma. If she had acted as a dutiful mother in understanding the pulse of her disabled son, she would have chosen a right sympathetic and empathetic life partner well in advance and would have averted the entire chaos.

Aurora has not only failed to do this but also with her vindictive and never forgiving nature she has doomed the life of her own blood and flesh. The novel also warns how the vindictiveness and the absence of the fervour of parental love in the life of a disabled person will culminate in anti-social elements. We are reminded of Vasco Miranda, who rightly puts it, “To be the offspring of our daemonic Aurora … is to be truly, a modern Lucifer” (5).

The Moor is now weak, motherless, fluttered about by phantoms of his past which torments him. The beast inside the beauty, Uma, has deprived him of his family wealth and above all his mother. At a time with his advanced aging, his mother would have been a contemporary and friend. “Six years! Six years of Aurora, twelve of Moor, lost. My mother was sixty three when she died; I looked sixty myself. We might have been brother and sister” (332). Then slowly he grows phantom like himself, becomes a ghost that walks and sinks into abstraction. “… alone now, motherless, he sank into immorality, and was shown as a creature of shadows, degraded in tableaux of debauchery and crime” (303).

Nowhere else to turn the Moor has obliged to become a thug to Raman Fielding – a fanatical, racist Politician. Psychiatrists say that,

When the constitution of the body is in some ways altered or genetically warped, it raises questions about the constitution of the self. More over, when the crippled, the man-with no figure, the misshapen body has to get rid of his past, when his face no longer
represents the personality he’s supposed to be. Then this character has
to look for another identity, that will be built not on familial
inheritance but on personal effect. (Harrison 33)

Hence the Moor becomes Fielding’s enthusiastic ‘Hammer’, and an active member of
his elite terrorist cell. His estrangement from Aurora, deception by Uma and frustration in life
make him violent to the core. He does not speak. His non-verbal behaviour has its own
language and it makes the meaning clear. For instance, he punches while others prefer to
kick. With his bare hands he clubs his victims viciously. The Moor, the only male hair of the
Zogoiby family relegates himself to the level of personal Hammer- Man of Fielding, an arch
rival of his parents. He muses pathetically: “Where you have sent me, mother – into the
darkness, out of your sight–there. I elect to go. The names you have given me – outcast,
untouchable, disgusting, vile – I clasp to my bosom and make my own” (296).

Since the Moor is the product of his polymorphic cultural and genetic background, his
situation does not leave much room for self expression under the weight of tradition. In this
position, he is at first what other people say he is or he should be the son of Aurora and
Abraham Zogoiby and nothing more than that. Hence the Moor’s identity is influenced or
conditioned by his parents. For the first time he feels proud for being the bodyguard of
Raman Fielding. He has an identity and belonging:

I found for the first time in my short-long life, the feeling of normality,
of being nothing special, the sense of being among kindred spirits,
among people – like me, that is the defining quality of home. (305)

With great relief he has abandoned his lifelong quest for an unattainable normality.
With great joy he reveals to the world his anger that has been stored in him by circumscription
and emotional complexities of his previous experiences.
…how much resentment at the world’s rejections, at the overheard giggles of women, at teacher’s sneers, how much unexpressed wrath at the exigencies of my sheltered necessarily withdrawn, friendless and finally mother – murdered life? (306)

His messed-up right hand determines other people’s reaction to him which varies from attraction to repulsion, from love to fear. As Raman Fielding compliments “Crooked fist of yours was a hammer worth having” (294). The crooked hand which so far has spoiled his equilibrium and remained as his source of inhibition has now become the source of his job as Raman Fielding’s thug, through which he has finally accepted the terms of his deformity, … I need no longer live a provisional life, a life-in-waiting; I needed no longer be what ancestry, breeding and misfortune had decreed, but could enter, at long last, into myself-my true self, whose secret was contained in that deformed limb, which I had thrust for too long into the depths of my clothing. No more! Now I would brandish it with pride. Henceforth I would be my fist; would be a Hammer, and not a Moor. (295)

A surface level analysis reveals that the Moor has undergone a change for better. But the novel projects, at the deeper level that the consequence of constant ill-treatment, the state of being continuously ignored, and the identity of a deformed person will result in undesirable activities. The novel warns us that how a deformed person’s alienation will culminate in anti-social aspects. The agony experienced on accounts of the neglect of the society is finely assuaged by the red carpet welcome extended to him by the anti-social role models. “I would become this man. I studied Fielding closely. I must say as he said, do as he did. He was the new way, the future. I would learn him, like a road”. (300)
Hence the metamorphosis of the Moor sounds optimistic at the surface level, but it is definitely not a welcome change. It is the outcome of open rejection, “I had rejected the old, for it had rejected me, and there was no point bringing its attitude into my new life. I too would be like this, I resolved; …” (300).

Throughout the novel there are ample evidences to prove that the life of a disabled person crumbles from years of neglect by the family, society and culture. Added to all these, the even more sordid debilitating factor the Moor undergoes in his life is racial prejudice. When the paintings of Aurora are stolen, Raman Fielding lampoons on the theft: “When such alien artifacts disappear from India’s holy soil, let no man mourn’, he said. If the new nation is to be born, there is much invader-history that may have to be erased” (364).

Aurora fails unpardonably as a mother to take care of her disabled son. But as an artist she is class apart. Her paintings can be hailed as national treasures. But she is a Spanish Christian. Therefore her creativity is underestimated. Equally the Moor, the offspring of Aurora can find his root neither in India nor in Spain. As a deformed cross-breed the Moor is thus exposed to racial prejudice. He proclaims:

After two thousand years, we still did not belong, and indeed, were soon to be ‘erased’ – which ‘cancellation’ need not be followed by any expression of regret, or grief … So we were invaders now, were we? (364).

The novel is passionately concerned with the fate of a disabled cross-breed. It also shows the nature of Indian society which gradually loses its past glories. Instead of hating the sin and loving the sinner, it embraces animosity, diversity and discord. Rushdie’s bone of contention is that India has lost its ancient historical generosity of spirit. It harbours division of minds. India which had been estimated high because it emerged:
… above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened, above hatred because loving, above vengeance because forgiving, above tribe because unifying, above language because many-tongued, above colour because multi-coloured

… (51),

But that unity in diversity is shattered by the Bombay bomb blast. The Moor loses his home, his kith and kin dear and near, the meaning of life. The Moor stands testimony to the pain described by Keats in the lines: “Now more than ever seems it rich do die, / to cease upon the midnight with no pain” (Keats 54-55).

Towards the end the Moor is found in Spain with death at his heels and the family story in his hands which he has, “been crucifying upon a gate, a fence, an olive tree, spreading it across this landscape” (1) of his last journey. It is quite explicit that like Shelley’s West wind the Moor is also tamed by age: “A heavy weight of hours has chained, and bowed / one too proud like thee: tameless, and swift” (Shelley 55-56). Similarly, as Shelley wants the West Wind to carry out his message throughout the world, the Moor wants his message to be spread across that landscape, so that no disabled person in future will undergo his lot. The Moor also wants to drive his “dead thoughts over the universe / like withered leaves to quicken a new birth” (64-65).

The Moor’s life is a silent call for a change. “In this sense the deformed body is not only a mediator of speech by voicing out a message, it is a message itself” (Harrison 13). It is believed that the family has taken foremost place not only in the safeguarding of morality but in the evolution of human culture. If the family flourishes in a state of unity and vigour, we will have a strong and sound society. But this is an age of fear and restlessness and most of the people are galvanised by hostile forces as a result of which they feel isolated and
lonely. At such times, parents become the main hope for self-preservation, for maintaining human dignity and the decencies of life.

If the parents do not abide by values, there will not be any harmony in the family structure. For children, their parents are the best examples to follow. The children learn by observing the parents. If the parents do not prove themselves to be exemplary in their behaviour, their children bring ruin not only upon themselves but on the entire living pattern of youngsters who are easily affected by unwanted external forces.

While the general observation is this among normal children, the attention should be much more in the case of disabled children who need to be protected very much by their parents. If this does not happen, the consequences are disastrous as seen in the case of Benjy in Sound and the Moor in Moors. If the parents think that a deformed child is a curse upon the family and therefore they have to pay least attention to the disabled child, they are disrespecting not only the law of individual responsibility but also universal responsibility.

To act altruistically is to affirm a sense of universal responsibility. Whether it is East or West, family is best and if there is no love but only false values; if there is no closeness but only detachment or indifference, any structure will crumble like a heap of cards. True compassion is universal in scope. Mothers who are the pivots of the family are necessitated to treat all children equally irrespective of their ability or disability. The mother of Benjy in Sound makes a much ado about the cerebral deformity of her son and the Moor in Moor’s asserts that his is a “mother-murdered life” (306).

The Moor has become “a withdrawn, friendless” man on account of his mother’s unmotherly or stepmotherly attitude. Besides, his so called lady love Uma, who is supposed to be his second mother, for in every Indian setup, the would-be-wife is a mother-substitute, becomes an antagonistic force which finally forces the Moor to belong to a gang of thugs.
The novelist enables us to realize that to eliminate thuggery among the disabled youth who are also destined to contribute to the destiny of any nation, mothers have to be real mothers. They should realize that there is no longer any stigma attached to being mothers of disabled children. And it is essential that the disabled youth should never be stigmatised either by family or society. We should have an open forum where the deformed people are not ‘accepted and suspected, but accepted and elevated. In the next chapter entitled “Demented War”, an attempt has been made to put forth the anguish and agony of disabled people in the back drop of war. Both Melville and Brecht through their powerful projection insisted on the need to bring in a change in the inconsiderate attitude of the selfish people and want them to be all inclusive in their approach to life.
Chapter 4