

EUGENICS & DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY: A STUDY OF SOCIETAL PERFECTION AND ITS IMPLICATION ON FAMILY

DIVYA HARIHARAN

Research Scholar, Lincoln University College, Malaysia. Email: divkasaad@gmail.com

Dr. SRI KRISHNA BANERJEE

Secretary, Lincoln Education PVT. LTD. Email: srikrishna.banerjee@gmail.com

Dr. ABDUL MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH

Associate Professor, Department of English, Jamal Mohamed College, Trichy, India.
Email: abdul.mjinnah@gmail.com

Abstract

Eugenics or Perfect breeding theory gained prevalence in the later part of the twentieth century. Human beings have always strived for the perfect set of genes to be passed on from one generation to another. Eugenics is the highest form elimination of so-called wrong gene by ceasing particular race, caste, creed, religion or colour to form a relationship. Many of the physical and mental deformities are viewed as genetical and hence eugenics, though inhuman, is considered a way to gain social perfection. The most prominent issue with eugenics is that this high standard leads to misunderstanding between the couples thus resulting in dysfunctional Family. Through this research paper the researcher explores autism in one of the children as a reason for dysfunctional family and how in the name of societal norms parents and children belonging to autistic spectrum are relegated from the mainstream of the society to the fringes, thus causing unnecessary pressure in the family relationship and leading to unhappy married life and dysfunctional family. The researcher takes up three novels to understand the impact of children with autism in the family. They are *The Curious Incident of Dog in the Night time* by Mark Haddon, *Colin Fischer* by Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz and *House Rules* by Jodi Picoult. The focus of this research is to understand the impact of eugenics and the want for perfect gene in life leading to dysfunctional family when a child is born with autism.

Keywords: Eugenics, Family Dynamics, Dysfunctional Family, Autism.

INTRODUCTION

In the TV series *The Big Bang Theory*, the protagonist Sheldon Cooper is a neuro - atypical personality. He belongs to autistic spectrum, though never mentioned blatantly. He is portrayed with numerous symptoms including obsessive compulsive disorder and he is anxious about social communication. *The Big Bang Theory* does provide a glimpse of how his family has suffered because of his lack of empathy and his inability to understand the emotions of other people. For example, his mother who dotes on him is lonely thus spiteful in her old age. She is seen to be constantly praying to God for Sheldon to have a good life. Sheldon Cooper loses his father in his early age. Hence his brother George Cooper takes care of the family. However, in Sheldon's narrative, George Cooper who provides for the family is never given any credit. This representation is not because of resentment towards George Cooper; it simply provides the viewers understanding of Sheldon Cooper's psyche. Sheldon Cooper does not understand or value material possession, he does not understand the meaning of relationships and hence can

never figure how George Cooper's contribution is important in his mother's and his sister's life.

As the viewers begin with Young Sheldon series the one that focuses only on Sheldon Cooper and his childhood, the situation becomes vivid. Sheldon here is having a tough time navigating the world filled with emotions, he is caught between love and care and being an emotionless person. He compares himself with Spock, from *Star Trek*. Like Spock he also grows up as someone who avoids emotional connection with humans in any way possible.

Young Sheldon also lacks humility or empathy. In case if he connects with someone it is for a reason or in most cases it is just a human experiment. He is repetitive in his behavior and does not understand jokes, sarcasm or any reprimand that he gets from his friends or others. His family falls prey because of his quirks. His twin sister who happens to study in the same class suffers constant mocking because of him. She wants to be popular kid, but she is unable to support Sheldon or let someone prank or trouble Sheldon. Similarly, George who may not be good at studies is always supportive of his younger brother. He finds Sheldon's ways annoying; they warn him as much as possible, but nothing works out for him. The worst part is Sheldon is the reason for his parents and their difference of opinion most of the time. They constantly bicker, they have serious financial issues, they go to the extent of having extramarital relationship, though Sheldon and his needs are reason for the same, Sheldon appears unflinching by all these situations. That is because he does not understand it in first place.

Sheldon's lack of understanding is clinically autism. The pattern of autism and its impact on family is repetitive in most of the fiction. Numerous fictional works on autism also portray dysfunctional family as one of its common themes. It is important to explore the same. Anthropologically, financially, socially and psychologically an autistic child is difficult to deal with. The society does not have enough awareness, teachers and caregivers do not understand the implication and most importantly the school or any other educational institution is not equipped enough for autistic children to learn and understand on their own terms. All these situations create direct impact on the family life and people who are directly involved. Children like Sheldon lack communication skill; hence the siblings end up communicating for them as well. The family is put in a position to support more than what is required and all these issues can be eradicated with creation of awareness. Fictional writers use this scape to make the readers aware of difficulties and implications of growing a child in autistic spectrum and hence educate them on how to deal with autistic child and others around them. This research work explores three fictional works, *The Curious incident of Dog in the Night time* by Mark Haddon; *Colin Fischer* by Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz and *House Rules* by Jodi Picoult and all the three stories deal with dysfunctional family as their major theme.

Through this research paper the researcher tries to focus on societal misconception of eugenics and how it impacts family life.

Theoretical Framework

The focus of this research work is to create awareness on the misconception of eugenics and how it impacts family and its structure when a child born does not fall under the category of

societal conception of perfection. Autism is a disorder and this disability can occur to anyone, but lack of awareness influences the relationship of family members by causing undue stress. The most pathetic parameters of society is to compare children of the same age group. Parents are constantly tormented by this where they have to make their children look better than the others. This judgmental view of how a child looks, behaves, how talented one is, everything causes friction in family. Through this paper the researcher analyses three novels taken up for study in terms of the societal norms of perfect child and how the children belonging to autistic spectrum are different from Neurotypical children thus causing pressure and stress among the members of family. The paper will also try to extrapolate how creating awareness is the only solution ahead.

DISCUSSION

In the first novel taken up for research, Mark Haddon, the author of the book uses family as a primary reason for the confusions. The plot revolves around a teen aged autistic boy, named Christopher. He finds it extremely confusing to adjust to the world and operate in it or understanding human emotions. Mark Haddon juxtaposes Christopher's internal plight caused by the world with that of external upheaval caused by his own family members. His family consists of a mother and father and Christopher is the only child. Christopher's identity causes rift between his mother and father. They fight constantly in terms of how they would like Christopher to be treated. The parents have their own issues, their differences and preferences, most importantly Christopher's father lets his world revolve around Christopher, which overwhelms Christopher's mother. She wants time for herself and this constant caring annoys her.

The strain in their relationship begins with complications in handling Christopher. He needs a lot of attention and care. This troubles Christopher's mother; she is constantly unhappy and goes to the extent of expressing this to Christopher. She imagines a better place and better life without her husband and Christopher. As a matter of fact, she goes on to narrate this like an episode to young Christopher. She says,

“If I hadn't married your father, I think I'd be living in a little farmhouse in the south of France with someone called Jean. And he'd be, ooh, a local handyman. You know, doing painting and decorating for people, gardening, building fences. And we'd have a veranda with figs growing over it and there would be a field of sunflowers at the bottom of the garden and a little town on the hill in the distance and we'd sit outside in the evening and drink red wine and smoke Gauloises cigarettes and watch the sun go down.” (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 117)

Christopher's mother and father lack compatibility. They have huge misunderstanding and this mostly is because of Christopher's inability to comprehend. Christopher lists down his problems. The list begins with not communicating with people for long time to other obsessions like not eating for long time, not drinking for long time, not letting anyone cuddle or pamper, claustrophobia, fear of new people, fear of new places, screaming when irritated, not understanding the feeling and emotions of others and being self-centered. Christopher

understands that these are his problems, he also comprehends that these are creating huge rift between his parents but unfortunately for him, he is not able to do anything about it.

Autism is a disorder that is characterized with obsessive compulsive disorder and social anxiety issues. So far there is no cure for it and only therapy seems to work. The issue with autism is there is no one symptom or one way of diagnosis. There are numerous levels of autism and hence it falls under a spectrum. Christopher's biological age and his maturity level do not sync at numerous situations, but Christopher is a genius in mathematics and science. He is extremely clever and well mannered. In certain cases, the children with autism may have huge differences in their mental and biological age causing more complications. For example, in the book *House Rules*, the readers can find that Jacob Hunt is also autistic and his mental and biological maturity are slightly higher than that of Christopher. He cannot express his thoughts which is not the case with Christopher.

Christopher is vocal and knows how to communicate. The society has a perception of what is perfect and what is imperfect. And Children with Autism are easily classified as imperfect because they need more attention than other children of the same biological age. All the children are difficult to handle in their teen age with hormonal fluctuation, it becomes more complicated for the parents to handle children with autism in their teenage. But the pressure of society, the constant comparison, the sympathetic look, the look of disdain, lack of friendship and proper support, every one of these aspects complicate the life of parents further more. The yearning for love and attention, a little more relaxed life that Christopher's mother wants is mostly the view of society. A quest and search for alternative reality, putting oneself in the situation and asking what if? What if, she is not married to this person? What if she has a different child? What if she has a better life? What if she is able to work? What if she is able to enjoy beautiful things with this money? All these thought processes lead her to wonder and thus despise Christopher's father. Though he is no way a sinner or responsible for her current situation.

I used to think that Mother and Father might get divorced. That was because they had lots of arguments and sometimes, they hated each other. This was because of the stress of looking after someone who has Behavioral Problems like I have. I used to have lots of Behavioral Problems, but I don't have so many now because I'm more grown up and I can take decisions for myself and do things on my own like going out of the house and buying things at the shop at the end of the road. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 69)

Christopher does realise that his mother and father are going to split. Instead his mother takes an alternative option. She has an affair with the neighbour, Mr. Shears and leaves the home along with him. She chooses to leave Christopher and his father far behind. His father is offended, angry and loses his patience over this. More so, he chooses to lie to his own son. Christopher's father tells Christopher that his mother has died out of heart attack and she is cremated. Christopher believes this to be truth and lives in the assumption that his mother has passed away.

Christopher's father tries to have a relationship with Mrs. Shears now that Mr. Shears has gone away with his wife. Something does not seem to work between Mrs. Shears and Christopher's father. This anger and feeling of incompetence drives his father crazy. Mrs. Shears has an issue with Christopher's father, because of Christopher and his demands. Christopher though uncomfortable with her initially is getting used to her. When things do not work out between them, Christopher's father gets angry and stabs Mrs. Shears dog with a garden fork, thus killing it. Christopher gets on an investigation of his own when the incident happens. He would like to find out who actually was the person who stabbed the dog. In the course of his investigation, he speaks to Mrs. Alexander a neighbour and gets an initial thought of Mr. Shears being involved in the crime.

Christopher also goes snooping in his own house and finds letters written by his mother, after her death, thus he confirms his mother is not dead and his father has lied to him.

The whole world of Christopher spins before him but he does not react like anyone else could have. He does not wait to know his father's side. He just gets angry on his father and runs away in search of his mother to London. When the mother comes to know that father has lied about her existence she is furious. Yet, father has a logic, he finds it easier to explain the mother's absence through death than anything else.

The absence of a parent is a recurring theme in the books that deal with autistic characters. The characters who are created based on real life experience follow the same symptomatic pattern. Eugenics and the yearning for perfect child in the society is harmful. There are millions of ways in which a child can be born, but they are constantly compared by the society as to who is better, if their organs are better, if they are good looking and smart. The list goes on. This comparison never ceases till ones death. Parents feel utmost responsibility for any situation that their children face and hence they are try to safeguard them. Both in case of Jacob Hunt and Christopher their autistic spectrum leads to the speculation of them to be the primary culprit in the crime.

When the police come to the crime scene, they see Christopher hugging wellington with blood on his clothes. The policemen conclude that Christopher is the murderer. They investigate him in that tone, and he is unable to answer properly because of this behavioural problems, thus leading to the whole scene being misconstrued. It is important to realise the pressure that the father undergoes in these scenarios. The first question that crops in the mind is what if I am not there to take care of Christopher. He cannot even trust mother in this situation because she is more self-centred. This vulnerability, anger, discomfort and most importantly the feeling of incompetence leads to trauma that he suffers and that is represented as anger on his wife.

When Christopher's mother questions as to why the letters were not shared with Christopher, the response of the father is anger. For him it is the most logical thing to do. From each of their perspective what they did was right. For Christopher's mother she needed someone and Christopher's father took Christopher as his only responsibility in life. Thus this difference of opinion causes all their issues. When it comes to running a family, committing and working with it, in terms of cleaning, cooking, caring, earning everything becomes as important and

society expects one to do all this but in reality it is highly difficult to just be a provider when one gets nothing in return.

And Father shouted, “I cooked his meals. I cleaned his clothes. I looked after him every weekend. I looked after him when he was ill. I took him to the doctor. I worried myself sick every time he wandered off somewhere at night. I went to school every time he got into a fight. And you? What? You wrote him some fucking letters. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 281)

The mother also yearns for empathy. When she is lonely, when she is worried, she begs Christopher. She asks him can I hold your hand for a moment. The mother wants to find solace through Christopher and the human connection, but Christopher rejects the same. His lack of understanding leads the mother to go in search of human warmth from someone else and it happens to be the neighbour Mr. Shears.

And then, after a while, she said, “Christopher, let me hold your hand. Just for once. Just for me. Will you? I won't hold it hard,” and she held out her hand.

And I said, “I don't like people holding my hand. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 276)

A similar strand of argument is visible in *Young Sheldon* series as well. George and Mary are two caring people, but their priorities and ability to give are different. George wants a quiet life away from all the external pressure. Mary wants the world to revolve around Sheldon. That creates a lot of strain in the relationship leading for both Mary and George to find different partners for themselves. All the while Sheldon remains oblivious to what is happening with their parents and how it is impacting his twin, he is more worried about his projects and his curriculum.

The twin sister Missy feels that she is not as important as Sheldon and feels alienated and distant in her own home. Theo Hunt in *House Rules* also experiences the same feeling of being distanced at his own home, hence he goes around to different places in search of solace. He makes it his habit to go into the locked houses which are beautiful, calm and clutter free. He goes to these places and experiences living without the constant noise caused by his older brother who is autistic. It is a crime to do the same. Many a times, the siblings feel lonely with all the attention given to the child who has behavioural problems by the parents, thus leading for them to become a criminal by chance or as an attention seeking attribute. Missy running away from her parents and going to frat parties are representation of the same attention seeking mechanism.

In the novel *Colin Fischer*, Danny the sibling of the protagonist with Aspergers though not as distant or cold towards him like Theo, does face lots of problems because of Colin. Every time his parents favour Colin over him, he is literally not allowed to talk anything against Colin. This one sided, partial representation of parents is because they assume the other child to understand the difficulties faced by the child with behavioural issues. It does not happen that way, the other child also has huge coping issues, first of all it is constantly questioning the

importance the sibling gets as opposed to the neglect that the other feels. The othering is confused situation in these scenarios.

While in general situation anyone who suffers the most is the other, in this case both the siblings suffer, one because of the medical condition and other because of the family condition. At times it is natural for them to rebel, develop hatred, even assume a possibility of life without the sibling. Missy loves Sheldon, she is also doting on him, she cares for him. Yet many times she feels that she is lonely and suffers alone. Her easy going nature leads her to be dismissed and taken for granted by her parents. As the issues become complicated, Missy feels that there is no one to hear her story, listen to her, even talk to her and feels that no one cares for her. She feels forgotten. Danny and Theo also feel the same.

The conversation between Jacob and Theo, Danny and Colin are sometime so offensive, as if the hatred that Theo and Danny have inside them blurts out. They instead of being supportive for their brothers, are angry at their difference. Because they have to face the world and its hatred, they bear all the mockery in the school and all the partiality at the home.

“Where’s the freak?” he yells.

“Theo, you will not call your brother—”

“How about I stop calling him a freak when he stops stealing things out of my room?” I have instinctively stepped between him and his brother, although Jacob is a head taller than both of us. (House Rules, Jodi Picoult, 14)

The abusive words freak and retard are not just used by strangers on the children with behavioural issues, even by their own parents and siblings at time. There is a genuine difference when Christopher’s mother beats or shouts at him. It is just anger. Here it is jealousy, enmity and more caustic in nature.

Mother had hit me sometimes because she was a very hot-tempered person, which means that she got angry more quickly than other people and she shouted more often. But Father was a more levelheaded person, which means he didn't get angry as quickly and he didn't shout as often. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 122)

The children who are different grow up in a toxic environment despite being in a good family. This is because how much ever the parents try to support them and be there for them, they still have huge issues in coping up with their differences. Particularly too much of attention that the children deserve is considered differently by their own siblings. The worst is in the school or society at large because there are bullies out there. Though the bullies are of same age, they trouble the children who have behavioural differences. Christopher and Jacob go to special school, but that is not the case with Colin. Since Colin’s parents cannot afford to put him in a special school, he is sent to school like everyone. Teachers, other parents and school children lack enough awareness thus causing more trouble and issues.

Most of the time the parents are caught between the siblings, they are constantly wondering on how to deal with a situation. When children fight it tends to get violent, and most parents take sides. In this case it is always the side of children with behavioural issues. This irks the other

one, and makes them protest vehemently against the family, against the system and creates more hatred in their heart.

Danny reacted like any animal when cornered. He chose to fight. His yell started at the balls of his feet and ended at his forehead, the adrenaline consuming him as he let loose. “You’re damn right I know how he is! You all walk on tippy-toes around him and are all ‘Oh, poor Colin ’whenever he acts like a retard and I’m the one who gets— (Colin Fischer, Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz, 248)

The children like Colin, Jacob or Christopher do not know how to express their love for their siblings, but they love them so much. The siblings may ill treat them, be abusive with them, even get violent with them, they still love them. Colin and Danny are always fighting. Danny is irritated for the treatment that Colin gets. He uses everything in his power to irk Colin but Colin always shows his love, it may be as simple as feeding their pets, it can be protecting them from parents, lying for them, sometimes as big as covering up their crime.

Evolutionary mathematician JBS Haldane expressed the principle best when he declared, “I would lay down my life for two brothers or eight cousins.” I find this explanation unsatisfactory, too. I only have one brother, but I would lay down my life for him if necessary.

I expressed this to Danny on his eleventh birthday, just before he blew out the candles and made his wish. He told me not to get his hopes up. (Colin Fischer, Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz, 336)

It is at times so important to realize the thin gossamer thread that glues the family is these children, but it is also the reason why the family breaks into multiple pieces and becomes dysfunctional. Similar to Christopher, Colin and Jacob also have a list of things that they cannot do. All the three of them are high functioning, about the same age group, but their understanding, development and situations are completely different. Similar to Christopher, Colin and Jacob also encounter crime in their life. In case of Christopher, he is the directly accused of committing the crime, of stabbing the dog with the garden fork.

Colin on the other hand, encounters crime in the school campus. There is an episode where someone is blamed for having a gun. The suspicion immediately turns on the bully Wayne and he is suspended from the school. Though he has tormented Colin in the past numerous times, Colin feels that Wayne has not committed the mistake. Colin takes up on him to solve the mystery, he starts with investigation and finally ends up finding the real culprit. During the investigation no one treats him seriously, even after the investigation, he is just sent away even without a proper appreciation.

The major reason for no one to take Colin seriously is his Asperger’s, he does not have a friend who he can rely on or confide in. This does not seem to torment; his logical state of mind somehow is helpful. He is on a mission to save Wayne, despite him being a bully. Like Christopher, Colin also has a book that acts as a cue to decipher the facial expression of people. Colin has memorized them for the ease of everyday. But sometimes, this cue book is not

enough, and that is when he constantly tries to place the expression with possible cues and finds out what is being said.

Colin is different. He doesn't like to be touched, even by his parents. He can't tolerate loud noises. He has a hard time reading facial expressions; he keeps notes on what faces correspond to what emotions, so he can match them up with the people around him and tell what they're feeling. (Colin Fischer, Ashley Edward Miller and Zack Stentz, 9)

The pressure of the perfect child in a society is represented differently by every parent. In case of Christopher his parents constantly fight, they have numerous differences of opinion. Even when Christopher runs away to his mother in London, after finding that the father has been lying til now, Christopher reaches the mother's place and realise she is with Mr. Shears. He does not know how to handle Christopher though he tries. As a matter of fact, even his own mother does not know how to handle, this frustrates her and creates more rift between the father and mother. They have different understanding of his needs, wants, choices and preferences.

Christopher is mostly construed as selfish and single minded by people around him. Mr. Shears even goes to the extent of asking this out to Christopher. Because taking care of him, and understanding his quirks needs a lot of patience, which his mother lacks. She is always irritated and worried that her life has turned pathetic because of Christopher. Mr. Shear voices out the same as follows:

“You think you're so fucking clever, don't you. Don't you ever, ever think about other people for one second, eh? Well, I bet you're really pleased with yourself now, aren't you.” (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 295)

In the book, *Imagining Autism*, while discussing about the family and its perception of autism or disability, Sonya Freeman Loftis, takes a view wherein she says, the empathising, sympathising is one form of representation that the fictional writers take, while it is also important to understand most of the violence on differently abled are by family members, be it physical, mental or psychological. There are umpteen cases of representation where the children are physically tortured, beaten and are tried to be killed. Similarly there are also cases of sexual abuses by parents, or siblings or even other family members. Even if the torture is not physical or sexual, mental abuse never ceases.

There are other aspects in representing a differently abled person, according to Sonya Freeman Loftis, it is creating them as an image that keeps the family together, or at times it is the image of showcasing them as home wreckers.

As the monolithic nature of the narrative replaces one group with another, what appears on the surface to be empathy and tolerance suggests further stereotyping and discrimination. These “monstrous” figures either unite the family unit or destroy it, either strengthen the community with their outcast status or symbolize the community's ultimate decay by remaining within it. In the end, the Gothic mode proves to be the ideal genre for symbolically representing cultural anxieties and fears that interweave autism, family, and tragedy. (Imagining Autism, Sonya Freeman Loftis, 80)

While a child born is construed in society as a binding factor, any child for that matter can act both as a uniter or a destroyer. It is just the perception of the family, its nature, its behaviour and its own emotional burden. Forcing these principles on children are scary and, in a way, preposterous.

In case of Christopher and Jacob they are both seen as house wreckers, if it is not for Christopher their parents would have had a better life and been together; same is the case with Jacob, because Henry loves Emma, his only problem is Jacob and the attention that Jacob gets all the time. He feels there is no peace in the house. There is a similar strand in case of Christopher's mother, she wants a life better with no noise, with calmness by the ocean, with no financial troubles. It is easier to create an anti-thesis with these characters but it is harmful because what Christopher's mother and Henry want is a normal life, they are not altruistic enough, this does not make them evil, just humanly. The society's pressure of normal life creates these desires in them. If only society would be a little more accommodating and understanding, most importantly aware, then these issues would not crop up in the first place.

As opposed to Christopher and Jacob's situation, in case of Colin he is the glue that holds the family, his parents are a team, they understand the situation and decide to tackle the difficulties together. It sort of irks Danny, he feels that Colin gets all the attention and love.

The family constitutes of numerous small emotions, finance plays a major role in it, tending a child, unlike the neurotypical one, can be a costly affair, it calls for a lot of sacrifice from the other members of the family. Many a times, parents use these labelling to avoid taxes and provide medical assistance to their children, yet it is never enough. There is a constant need for a guardian who can care for the children, a mentor who could teach them to cope with the overwhelming world, most importantly there is need for sufficient money to work around every one of their quirks. At times, there is a severe emotional drain in providing for these children. For example, Mother of Christopher already goes through severe emotional trauma because she is unhappy with her husband and disdain in the household and that is the reason she goes and lives with Mr. Shears. He also lacks empathy and does not provide the attention that Christopher deserves, the worst part is he does not let the mother give the attention as well. It is then the mother feels consumed in this chaos. She does not have a job, a house to live and above everything, she has a human living with her who requires special care and hence she decides to go back to her husband. He is not understanding, but he is willing to do the sacrifice for the sake of Christopher, so he lets them live in his house and he himself lives with his cousin instead. This arrangement cannot go on for a long time, Christopher's mother becomes nervous and in pressure starts looking for a job, finally she finds one, but not enough to provide for both herself, her expenses and her son. She is again dependent on Christopher's father.

She gets into a one bedroom apartment and Christopher is not happy with the arrangement, he wants a garden, he wants to keep his pet rat Toby, but there is no enough space for all of this.

And another bad thing was that Toby died because he was 2 years and 7 months old, which is very old for a rat, and I said I wanted to bury him, but Mother didn't have a garden, so I buried him in a big plastic pot of earth like a pot you put a plant in. And I said I wanted another rat but Mother said I couldn't have one because the room was too small. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 310)

Christopher is a clean person by nature, he is obsessively clean and does not like using the washroom that others use. He does not like strong smells, when Christopher has to manage in the new space, it is not just Christopher but his mother despite her health, impact of working, cooking, cleaning and all the household chores also has to clean the washroom that is common, every time before Christopher uses it.

So we moved into a room in a big house that was made of red bricks. And the bed was in the same room as the kitchen and I didn't like it because it was small and the corridor was painted brown and there was a toilet and a bathroom that other people used and Mother had to clean it before I used it or I wouldn't use it and sometimes I wet myself because other people were in the bathroom. And the corridor outside the room smelled like gravy and the bleach they use to clean the toilets at school. And inside the room it smelled like socks and pine air freshener. (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon, 293)

It is not any different in case of Jacob or Colin, in case of Jacob. Jacob's father Henry was never in favour of Jacob getting so much of attention from his childhood. Henry who is a computer professional finds it extremely difficult to work from home, with young Jacob constantly throwing tantrums. Henry puts her in a situation where she has to choose between Jacob and him and as a mother, she chooses Jacob. Henry leaves the house, moves to Silicon Valley and gets married to another woman and even has a new family.

He was a computer programmer who worked at home and couldn't stand the tantrums Jacob would throw when the slightest thing set him off: a bright light in the bathroom, the sound of the UPS truck coming down the gravel driveway, the texture of his breakfast cereal. By then, I'd completely devoted myself to Jacob's early intervention therapists—a parade of people who would come to our house intent on dragging him out of his own little world. I want my house back, Henry told me. I want you back. (House Rules, Jodi Picoult, 20)

Jacob is arrested for the murder of his social skills tutor Jess. Jacob's mother does not even imagine something like this happening, the biggest issue here happens to be how is she going to meet out the expense of providing for two grown up teenagers Jacob and Theo, for Jacob's special needs and most importantly for a lawyer to fight this case out in the first place.

The world is not courteous enough and Emma loses her job while in the middle of the legal war, because her son is arrested for murder.

A tiny cry escapes as I realize the magnitude of what I've just done. I'm a single parent; I hardly make any money as is; I can't work outside the home right now—how am I going to afford to live without a job? I could call my old boss from the textbook company and beg for freelance assignments, but it's been twenty years since I worked there. (House Rules, Jodi Picoult, 799)

CONCLUSION

To conclude there is a definite case of impact caused by societal idea of perfection. The society is not yet ready for divergent. The idea of family for society comprises of a mother, a father and children. Sometimes even these aspects are not enough, the idea grows into a beautiful mother, a financially sound father and healthy, decent, well behaved, intelligent children. When something is different in this so-called perfect set up, the family undergoes severe emotional, financial and most importantly, psychological drain that arises out of constant comparison between children in school, neighborhood and public places. Sometimes these pressures are so intolerable that the family involved becomes tormented for life. The children become angry and violent and the parents become abusive. There is constant need for attention and love in these families. Everyone blames the other and there is strong friction that puts everyone in an unhappy situation, with at least one wanting to find an escape route. In all the three fictional works taken for study, the researcher can find that there is so much of undue pressure in the child who is different. The siblings are unhappy, and so are the parents.

There is no understanding, but towards the end, they are trying to find a happy spot for themselves. For example, Christopher's father comes to terms with his son, and mother is happy to have the father take care of all the responsibilities, so she can create a living for herself. In a way, Christopher helps his mother set a new house and he working with his father on a garden patch also denotes the same. Christopher himself is looking forward to becoming a scientist. In case of Jacob, though his sentence is not yet declared, it does not matter much because everyone in the family are in a happy place. Emma finds a lover, who takes care of her children and loves them. Theo understands his brother's love for him and comes in terms with it and most importantly, Henry understands what he has missed out. Theo though understands his brother, will never forgive him, or come to terms with him for everything in past. This is beyond both of them, only time will change it. In Colin's case, the parents who were always supportive become more supportive and appreciate him for solving the mystery. Even the brother who is abusing Colin because he gets all the attention and love from the family, forgives him and lauds him for saving Wayne. Colin learns to develop friendship and he becomes close to Wayne. Colin blatantly expresses that he will do anything for his brother, Danny.

Danny slides this emotion away with his usual sarcasm, but Danny also loves Colin. Coming in terms with the situation is a bit complicated when a child is different in a family, but everyone has their own coping mechanisms and eventually they learn to grow, they also learn to deal with the society in their own way, because the importance that they give to society

initially slowly fades as the family itself becomes war zone. It is a sort of maturity or ability to understand and deal with the society at large that these children teach their parents. They learn that everyone has a problem, and autism at least is worthy of dealing because ultimately it is the children that is important.

Eugenics and expectation of perfect children is always synonymous with dysfunctional family. The representation of family which is broken where there are no ways to mend these complicated relationships, given the complicated relationship paradigm of contemporary era, disability in a child can be easily navigated with creation of awareness and understanding, with proper support of institutions and most importantly with little more of information to the young parents. Parents also should learn to give equal importance to the siblings and balance out any differences. Eugenics though can cause differences of opinion, it is up to an individual and the family at whole to become dysfunctional or be more forgiving in nature. Autism is an absence of neurotypical behaviour, and it definitely can be dealt only with creation of more awareness in the society.

References

- 1) Stephens, S., & Haddon, M. (2015). *The curious incident of the dog in the night-time*. Dramatists Play Service, Inc.
- 2) Miller, A., & Stentz, Z. (2013). *Colin Fischer*. Penguin UK.
- 3) Picoult, J. (2010). *House Rules*. Simon and Schuster.
- 4) Molaro, S., & Lorre, C. (Executive Producers). (2017-2023). *Young Sheldon* [TV series]. Warner Bros. Television.
- 5) Loftis, S. F. (2015). *Imagining Autism: Fiction and Stereotypes on the Spectrum*. Indiana University Press.
- 6) Lorre, C., & Prady, B. (Executive Producers). (2007-2019). *The Big Bang Theory* [TV series]. Warner Bros. Television.