



American South and “The Sound and the Fury”

Tripti Sonowal

M.A in English

Hpbtripti88@gmail.com

Abstract: The Southern United States commonly referred to as the American South or simply the South is a region of the United States of America. The historical and cultural developments of South have been influenced by an early support for the doctrine of states' rights, the institution of slave labour on plantation in the lower South to an extent seen nowhere else in the United States, the presence of a large proportion of African Americans in the population, the legacy of Civil War, and the methods of frequently deny black people of the rights of the vote or hold office until the 1960s. Historically the South relied heavily on agriculture. It has since become more industrialized and urban has attracted national and international migrants. The American South is now among the fastest growing areas in the United States.

“The Sound and the Fury” by William Faulkner has its setting on American South. Faulkner has discovered the fictional and imaginary land which he loves to call Yoknapatawpha country, the land of his dreams and the land which is the perfect place for him. The outcome his desire is visualized in his novel “The Sound and the Fury”. The great Southern writer of the Yoknapatawpha country, he is identified with the American South.

Keywords: American South, Civil War, Slavery, African-American.

From his childhood, Faulkner witnessed depression, frustration, and downfall of the economy, social justice of the people, their poverty which they had experiencing after the civil war. The tragedy of South after the civil war is expressed with a variety of narration in his fiction and it became the subject of his work. The south after the civil war left behind only bits and pieces of cultural luxury and consequently turns foundering spirits. After the defeat in civil war, the South cannot participate fully and freely in the development of American society that is industrialization and large scale capitalism. It was living on the margin of the history.

The civil war years were important for the development of Southern literature in several ways. First, the formation of confederacy and secondly, the war forced the South to rely more fully on its own literary sources rather than those of European. History, family, race, class, gender, relation have been the basic factors for Faulkner's creation of American South. The traditional southern values of family and community influenced William Faulkner. He used what would later be called South's concept of the extended family. The story about his South is actually a story about sensation of families of different races, classes, origins which are situated in a typical Southern community with its own problems, vices virtues and particularities. This novel “The Sound and the Fury” is an excellent representation of cultural change in America during 1960s. The interaction between black servants and their white employers portrays a sense of the feeling that the South was going through, because they knew that times were changing, aristocracy was slowly diminishing and modernism was rapidly rising.

Family, a basic factor or social unit is the key stone of Faulkner's world. Consequently, the traditional system of values, family pride, and legacy of glorious past etc. are the main motives that determent sector and behaviour of majority of his characters. Each of Faulkner's family is usually presented in four stages that could according to Olga W. Vickery in her paper, “The Contours of Time”, be called elemental being, doing, thinking and remembering.

Besides using the model of Southern history and the traditional institution of family as the main creative principles, Faulkner fiction relies in some other element of the actual structure of the American South. One of them is the dominance of race which is a social contract or product not biological.

The Southern economy relied upon on the slaves to work on its vast plantation. Slavery had become essential to the Southern way of life. It was a confusing time in which blacks were legally emancipated. Due to the loss of slavery as a business, as well as the rapid growth of industry and manufacture, the South lost its place as an economic influence on the nation. Faulkner creates the Compson family to manifest the economic troubles of the South and their effects on the people of the region. The economic degradation of the Compson family worsen throughout the years, until Mr. Compson in “The Sound and the Fury” is eventually forced to sell his remaining land to fund his daughter Caddy’s wedding and his son Quentin’s education.

Though “The Sound and the Fury” is about the downfall of the old South, Faulkner uses the Compson’s servant Dilsey as a symbol of hope for future. Throughout the novel she maintains her values faced with hardship and the Compson impending downfall. The novel’s central purpose is therefore explained through Dilsey, implying that the values of the old South were not necessarily wrong but corrupted.

William Faulkner’s novel can be viewed as a thorough emancipation of his preoccupation with deteriorating morality of the post Civil War South. It appears as though Faulkner has found that the virtuous tradition of the old South have been replaced with a modern sense of helplessness and self-absorption. The character of Quentin and lady seem to be unable to exist without the traditional values that they try so hard to reject Benjy is completely preoccupied with his past, unable to deal with his new reality and shake off the memories of his sister. It is then left to Jason to maintain the honour of the Compson family, but his self- absorption and single mindedness present him from doing so.

The agony, frustration, despair, chaos of civil war experienced by the people of the American South has been skilfully narrated by Faulkner through his characters. The aristocratic structure of slavery was destroyed the South lost the war, but many of the social values remained. White still controlled the economic social structure of the region.

References: Faulkner, William. “The Sound and The Fury”.2020.General Press,New Delhi.

[www.https://neoenglish.wordpress.com/2010/12/12/%E2%80%9Cthe-sound-and-the-fury%E2%80%9D-as-a-novel-of-the-american-south/](https://neoenglish.wordpress.com/2010/12/12/%E2%80%9Cthe-sound-and-the-fury%E2%80%9D-as-a-novel-of-the-american-south/)

[www.https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Sound-and-the-Fury-novel-by-Faulkner](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Sound-and-the-Fury-novel-by-Faulkner)

[www.https://edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/william-faulkners-sound-and-fury-narrating-compson-family-decline-and-changing-south](https://edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/william-faulkners-sound-and-fury-narrating-compson-family-decline-and-changing-south)