

**THEME OF RELATEDNESS IN
ARTHUR MILLERS'S ALL MY SONS**

Sajjan Kumar,

Research Scholar (English)

Mathematics & Humanities, MMU, Mullana

Dr.Gunjan Agarwal

Associate Professor (English)

Mathematics & Humanities, MMU, Mullana

Modern drama in general and American drama in particular is widely dominated by *O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee*. They represent the peak of American dramatic achievement. The plays of Arthur Miller, moreover are informed by certain rules, attitudes and concepts cast within the frame work of contemporary American culture and society. All the events, incidents and thematic patterns in his plays are chiefly, interwoven with the American past to capture and exhibit its valuable continuity and connectivity with the present. Miller in his essay on Social Plays has said that all drama is social and tends towards a description of how man showed live in relationship with each other. Aristotle has rightly contended that man is a social animal. And that is the reason that he cannot live and even separate himself from the social and cultural moorings, as it relates and forms an integral part of his existence. Members of the society are not strangers and it is (also) unconceivable that any individual can flourish unless all of them do it collectively.

This is what constitutes the central stream in the plays of Arthur Miller in general and *All My Sons* (1947) in particular where the dramatist by the effective employment of the narrative mode of 'expressionism' skillfully analyses, explores and even comprehends the role and relevance of familial values ___ the symbiotic indispensability of man to his circum – ambient universe within the commercialized, materialistic fabric of post – war American strata and establishment. Dennis Welland neatly sums up the commitment of Miller's plays in this concern:

"It is not that Miller uses the family as a microcosm, but rather in "laying siege to the fortress of unrelatedness," he always sees the family as related to the larger group, the society, in inescapable and life-giving way". (Dennis Welland)

All My Sons (1947) is a powerful family drama that exhibits Miller's adroit handling of the theme of relatedness in full measures. In this play Miller touches upon a white common place but realistic theme and skillfully raises it into a drama of rare dramatic excellence.

In this play Joe is a common family man living in modern society as a provider, breadwinner, husband and father. He believes that the growing prosperity of his factory and his fame as successful businessman has surely enhanced and consolidated his authority as a father in the family.

His act of supplying defective cylinders to the Air Force during the War time leads to the death of not only twenty-one pilots, but of twenty-two, his own son Larry being the twenty second. It also leads to the annihilation of his family. Kate and Chris abuse him, for they consider him solely responsible for the discord in the family. Kate and Chris accuse him for being solely responsible for the death of Larry. He finds this loss caused by his act irreparable. He finds his redemption beyond recovery. Larry's death makes him realize what Chris' infuriated arguments and counterarguments could not. It makes him see the worthlessness of his false business and familial ambitions. He realizes the futility of his fatherly responsibilities. The realization of falseness and hollowness of his dream and assumed morality makes him see his falsehood destroyed. Therefore, Joe realizes his responsibility towards his country and society and consequently he starts regarding all the boys died in the war as his sons: "Sure he was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were." (Collected Play 126)

Indeed, Joe's final step of committing suicide emphasizes Miller's vision of the balance, equilibrium between family and the society where the private inner world and the external reality co-exist together, and hence cannot be separated from each other. As Miller aptly remarks: "Society is inside man and man is inside society the fish is in the water or the water is in the fish". (The Shadows of Gods 177)

The ignorance of the fact that a man belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond the two has been aptly summed up by Benjamin Nelson who points out:

"Keller's crime is the consequence of the pervasive illness of unrelatedness. It is this bland but lethal disease that is so frightening for Miller because it plunges into jungle anarchy all civilization's attempts at order and meaning. And it is against this barrier of un-relatedness that Chris Keller hurls himself". (Benjamin Nelson 86)

Therefore, the plays of Arthur Miller represent a mature concept of the individual's relations with family and society. Play after play, he illustrates how it is only an illusion to imagine of a healthy and prosperous family or individual life if there is no room for social and humanistic concerns for one another, and particularly for the parents and children in the modern family life. This is what costs the peace and happiness of the Keller, Loman families and Eddie Carbone in *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman* and *A View From The Bridge* respectively.

In this way, the plays of Arthur Miller, and more specifically *All My Sons* (1947) are humble dramatic expiation of the central theme of relatedness where the dramatist exposes and explores the falseness of the modern, mechanical world so that the audience could realize disillusionment with it and be wiser and enlightened learning a lesson from the fall of the protagonists.

WORKS CITED

1. Dennis Welland, *Arthur Miller: The Playwright*, (1979; Trowbridge, Great Britain: Redwood Burn Ltd., 1983) 12.
2. Arthur Miller, "The Shadows of Gods," *The Theatre Essays of Arthur Miller*, ed. Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), p.177.
3. Arthur Miller, "The Shadows of Gods," *The Theatre Essays of Arthur Miller*, ed. Robert A. Martin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978),
4. Benjamin Nelson, *Arthur Miller: Portrait of a Playwright*, (London: Peter Owen, 1970) 86.