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DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF HUMAN LIFE AND COMPLEXITIES IN
RELATIONSHIP IN THE PLAYS: “DEATH OF A SALESMAN” AND “ALL MY
SONS”

Dr. Soham Chaudhary

Assistant Professor

Cambridge Institute of Technology, Ranchi

Abstract:

Miller has been one of the most outspoken American writers of the last few decades. He has held generally progressive and magnetic views and has variously written about complexities in relationships, frustration, and anxiety. We can see these ideas in his plays- Death of a salesman and All my sons. These plays focused on the cause of the exploited and harassed individual of Modern society, who is a victim of the so-called rat-race and the evils of capitalism which came with a sense of social injustice and degradation that came with the loss of moral values. We can find ourselves in his dramas as they throw light upon the human thinking and relationship. It enables us to share our joys, sorrow, pains, suffering, mental anxieties and also find solutions in the theme of Arthur Miller’s dramas.

Keywords: Capitalism, Anxiety, Degradation, Injustice

Introduction

Arthur Miller was an American playwright who came to the panorama after the Second World War born on 17th October 1915 in a Jewish middle class family in New York. His own life is no less romantic than a fiction. It was his family’s economic ruin that he did so many local works as he usually delivered bread for local bakery before attending his classes.

After completed his schooling in *Brooklyn*, he worked in an automobile parts shop and held several other jobs of the same kind. He got his higher education at the University of *Michigan*, where he distinguished himself in Journalism and play writing. After a few years of struggle as a playwright Miller achieved his first success with *All my Sons* in 1947, since then, he has written about nine major plays, film scripts, short stories and several critical essays. He earned all fame and success as a playwright in modern society. It was his views that made him different from others. In his dramas he portrayed different aspect of modern society and their thinking, socio cultural, psychological problems, and

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humane sufferings. Arthur Miller is a great American dramatist. He is very popular far and wide. He is a great modern dramatist in the sense that he raises almost all important problems of the contemporary society and his vision is universal. Whatever he writes in reference to the American society stands true to the whole mankind. We can understand his popularity that his play *All my Sons* had 328 performances, while *Death of a salesman* ran for 742 performances in the history of twentieth century. Arthur Miller's plays are commendable and analyzed it as dramatic literature. Critics praise his effective use of vernacular, moral insight and strange sense of social responsibility. Miller's major achievements are *Death of a Salesman* in 1949. It won the 1949 "Pulitzer Prize" for drama and the 1949 "New-York drama circle" award for 'Best Play of the year'. It was also cited as one of the finest plays by the contemporary dramatist. Everyone believes that Arthur Miller deserves the title of "Social Dramatist". Some critics believe his work presents a socialist commentary on the economic structure of the United States.

Through his dramas we can analyze the structure of modern society and feeling of alienation. It is very difficult to understand the different aspects of human life and their relationship but Miller beautifully presented the complexities in men and women and disillusionments in

life which is related to modernism, human values and principles. Therefore here we would like to study Miller's dramas as an American dramatist and his understanding of the nuanced development in the character of his dramas along with the thematic patterns.

Phase and features of human life

Gradual changes and mental frustration in the characters of Millers drama artistically portrayed along with the course of development of the story. He also picked the realistic theme among the American society. That was the period when sense of social injustice and degradation that came with the loss of moral values. In a speech "*The shadow of the God*" that he delivered in 1958 at a meeting of the new dramatists in New York, Miller described his childhood and adolescence in the midst of depression; "*The Depression was my book*" he says, the poverty of an early life forced upon him was a revision of life's values "Practically everything that had been said and done up to 1929 turned out to be fake. It turns out that there had never been any body in charge". We can understand that situation when one person had experience of sudden poverty that coincided in Miller's life with his adolescent age, which brings disillusionment in any person's life. In the speech mentioned above, Miller talks of tragedies repeated of the hidden forces of

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life which are stronger than an individual man's effort or will. As we can see in Greek tragedy, man is a victim of the forces which operate outside his control and are generally at cross purpose to his own action and design. It is the phase of human life that the power of capitalism and the urbanized value-system that tends to regiment and control the life of an average individual. This is the power of his source of thinking that he was capable to draw the picture of modern society and modern theme of realistic mode. This however, has not stopped him from experimenting with various expressionistic techniques, as is evident in his plays like, *Death of a Salesman* and *All my sons*.

Death of a salesman is a story of Willy-Loman, an unfortunate traveling salesman. His talent is far a kind of humanistic just prudence. We observed synthesizes elements from social and psychological realism to depict the individuals for identity with in a society especially in *Death of a salesman*. Death of a salesman is a predictable history of our facts like Willy Loman can be seen as everybody father, brother, uncle or friend, his family is our cousins. He tries revealing the good times but keeps coming up against things that went wrong. We also uncover the both naturalism and expressionism, in *Death of a salesman* as the Willy Loman's shows losing struggle against social,

familial and economic forces beyond his control and that these literary and philosophical approaches are used to show the breakup of Willy and the family.

Death of a Salesman is a mirror to the struggling modern characters in the world of postmodernism. This play is the story of all human beings who are in search of success, love, pride and ambitions but are swing between the modern and post modern values. They find themselves disheartened and isolated in the cruel language of modern and consumer world. Both the plays present the entrapped modern man who finds themselves disconnected from the modern weird world and its values. *All my sons* has been viewed by many as a sarcastic attack on the American dream of achieving wealth and success that is all about the paradoxes of being alive in the technological society. It is a tale of violence within the family.

Complexities in relationships

The play deals with various elements such as family problems, dilemma in relationship distance between illusion and reality, the sense of isolation, lack of understanding and the struggle for being. There is a no crime in *Death of a salesman*, we can see that his sons trying to find their way through a world of images, dazzling dreams and fantasies, but they have failed by the standard they have chosen to believe

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are fundamental. Willy Loman is a man who is alienated and lives in isolation. He has no emotional attachment with his wife and sons therefore the theme of isolation is a focal point of the story, since it is what drove him to his suicide. He is a perfect example of a man alienated by the society that is controlled by money and power. The materialistic world makes trouble for him instead of helping him. *Death of a salesman* is a real masterpiece which breaks the boundaries of time and place and goes beyond the specific epoch. Family and relationships is the first unit of the society which has important roles in man's life. It is the source of power and support for its members. In the Loman's family unity and connections have been fading away. This family has only four members, but they are as far as separated islands. Lack of understanding and generation gap are very obvious in the Loman's which lead to their disconnection. Therefore, disintegration and isolation are outstanding concerns of modernism, which have been portrayed very creatively in *Death of a salesman*.

The problem of 'Un-relatedness' is a major theme in the plays of Miller. In his first major play of Miller, *All my Sons*, Joe Killer's narrow-minded vision does not allow him to look beyond the four walls of his home and his immediate family. He is unable to understand the fact that there is a world beyond his immediate neighborhood

to which he is also responsible. He failed to be the good man, the good citizen that his son, Chris demands, his fault according to Miller and Chris demands, was that he did not recognize any allegiance to society at large. This is a fact that a man belongs not only to himself and his family, but to the world also in which he lives. In the words of *Benjamin Nelson*, "Killer's crime is the consequence of the pervasive illness of un-relatedness". Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* like Joe Killer in *All my Sons* is completely oblivious of the needs of the society and is primarily interested in the welfare of his own immediate family members.

We can see that, in Miller's plays the theme of human values and isolation, separation and individual powerlessness is re-occurring. I would like to say that his plays are based on the life of a man or a person who has basically failed at everything whatever he has done. All this bad fortune is not just by his own faults but he has to face the cruel reality for the world and tries to cope with it. Unfortunately his own failures are at his attempt of coping with the real world.

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