Chapter I

Introduction

It was in the beginning of sixteenth century that the English made their first successful settlement in North America. People of many nationalities such as French, Spanish, and other European communities began pouring into America. These settlers liked to be known as Americans. Some had come for shelter, some for adventure, and some for riches and wealth. In the beginning, they spent all their time in extending the frontiers and fought pitched battles with the original inhabitants, Red Indians to deprive them of their lands. They spent their time in felling trees and preparing the land for cultivation. They also built long cabins for shelter. Thus, in the beginning, these settlers had no time for recreation and theatre.
Moreover, Puritans among these settlers were sternly and strictly against theatrical performances. These Puritans were so rigid and fanatic in their opposition of theatre that they did not allow even the morality plays to be staged. Thus, under these circumstances it took a long time for the theatre to register its entry in America. Despite occasional inroads made by the native playwrights such as Royall Tyler, the plays of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Robertson, and Dumas from across the Atlantic continued to dominate the stage in America. With the passage of time, a wholly commercial theatre emerged in the United States. Its sole purpose was to provide entertainment to the people. It was by the end of the nineteenth century that the Puritan prejudice against the theatre disappeared, and thus, the theatre was released and liberated from the awful grip and terror of Puritans. However, thematically melodrama of nineteenth century reminds the audience of American Puritanism in its emphasis on moral aspect of life:
Melodrama . . . offered a simple, moral view of life compatible with residual
American Puritanism. Right and wrong are clearly discernible. Villains are
congenitally evil, and they do bad things in elaborately contrived plots. In the
end they suffer for their misdeeds. The good people, generally bland, two-
dimensional characters, live happily ever after or at least from the barely
avoided catastrophic climax to the almost immediate final curtain.
(Sternlicht 3)

During the nineteenth century, American stage was dominated by melodrama. It was
Eugene O’Neill (1888-1953) who was innovative in the sense that he broke away from the
tradition of sentimentality. Further, Arthur Miller also proved innovative in the sense that he
developed “a significant relationship to American culture, past and present, and to modern
American society” (Welland 8). Arthur Miller (1915 -2005) is one of the topmost American
playwrights of twentieth century American drama. He finds place of eminence with
internationally recognised connoisseurs of American Drama, such as Eugene O’Neill (1888-
1953), Thornton Wilder (1897-1975), Clifford Odets (1906-1963), Tennessee Williams
(1911-1983), and Edward Albee (b. 1928). In 1955, Miller wrote a lengthy essay entitled “On
Social Plays”. At that time, American theatre was in the grip of Tennessee Williams and
William Inge. Their plays were concerned with individual and psychological analysis. These
plays were divorced from the social context. Brenda Murphy rightly remarks, “In a theatre
where the works of Tennessee Williams and William Inge held sway Miller was trying to
define a tradition that would encompass both the psychological and the social. He found this
in the classical Greek drama” (11). Arthur Miller himself says, “Drama gains its weight as it
deals with more and more of the whole man, not either his subjective or social life alone, and
the Greek was unable to conceive of man or anything else except as a whole” (“On Social
Plays,” 54).
It is beyond doubt that quite a large number of theses have been written on the plays of Arthur Miller. It is but natural to point out the reason and purpose of this dissertation which is to highlight the family, social, political and economic relationships as depicted in Arthur Miller’s plays in the light of the concept of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54). It is also pertinent to point out that relationships in the plays of Arthur Miller in the light of the concept of the “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54) have not been taken up for investigation and evaluation in the theses on Miller’s plays till date. Regarding the concept of the “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54), Brenda Murphy rightly remarks, “The concept of the drama of the “whole man” – psyche and citizen, individual subject and social actor – has driven Miller’s own playwriting from very early on. The dialectic of personal self-actualization in conflict with social responsibility informs his work from beginning to end” (12). About Miller’s concern of “whole man” Gerald Weales rightly remarks:

. . . he [Miller] believes that the serious playwright must write social drama. For him, however, the genre is not simply ‘an arrangement of society’s evils.’ The term social drama which he calls the Whole Drama must recognise that man has a subjective and an objective existence that he belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond. (96)

Arthur Miller’s literary output is mainly influenced by three factors – Depression, Holocaust, and McCarthyism. For the purpose of this study nine major plays of Miller have been taken up – All My Sons (1947), Death of a Salesman (1949), The Crucible (1953) A View from the Bridge (1955), After the Fall (1964), Incident at Vichy (1964), The Price (1968), The Archbishop’s Ceiling (1977), and The American Clock (1980). Family and social relationships have been discussed in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, A View from the Bridge, After the Fall, and The Price; economic relationships have been taken up in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, The Price, and The American Clock; and political relationships
have been examined in *The Crucible*, *After the Fall*, *Incident at Vichy*, and *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*.

Arthur Asher Miller “was born on 112th Street in Manhattan on October 17, 1915” (Clurman, “Biographical Notes,” vii). His father, Isidore Miller was a Polish immigrant of Jewish origin. He was a hardworking businessman, a manufacturer of women’s coats. His mother, Augusta, was a housewife “born in America, apparently had few interests outside her home and children, leading the life of the average Brooklyn housewife” (Gould 247). Miller’s father wanted to provide facilities to his children which he did not have as a child in Austria-Hungary. From 1920-28, Miller attended Public School at #24 in Harlem. In 1923 at the age of eight, he happened to see for the first time a melodrama at Schubert Theatre in the company of his mother:

> When I was about twelve, I think it was, my mother took me to a theater one afternoon. We lived in Harlem and in Harlem there were two or three theaters that ran all the time, and many women would drop in for all or part of the afternoon performances. All I remember was that there were people in the hold of a ship, the stage was rocking – they actually rocked the stage – and some cannibal on the ship had a time bomb. And they were all looking for the cannibal: It was thrilling. The other one was a morality play about taking dope. . . . Those were the two masterpieces I had seen. (Miller, “Arthur Miller, The Art,” 6-7)

In 1928, the Millers moved to Brooklyn due to slump in business. There, Arthur Miller attended James Madison High School. Arthur Miller’s father was a wealthy businessman but the Wall Street Crash in 1929 proved disastrous; all was lost – business, stock and shares. At this point of severe economic crisis in life, Arthur Miller did several
jobs, such as from a crooner to delivering bread for four dollars a week. Demon of Economic Depression unleashed a reign of terror on people, property, and business. Highly devastating impact of Depression was so horrifying, terrible, and life-snatching that three persons living in Miller’s neighbourhood committed suicide. Miller tells in an interview: “They couldn’t cope. The impact was incalculable. These people were profound believers in the American dream. The day the money stopped their identity was gone . . . I don’t think America ever got over the Depression” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 1).

Miller got admission in the University of Michigan in 1934 to study Journalism. There he came in contact with the students of radical views; five of whom went to participate in Spanish Civil War. During his stay at the university, he wrote a number of plays which contained his radical views; and two of his plays – No Villain (1936) and Honors at Dawn (1937) won him Avery Hopwood Award. He chose theatre because “it was the cockpit of literary activity and you could talk directly to an audience and radicalize the people” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 2). Economic Depression had caused problems of survival for writers, actors, producers, and directors and all sorts of people who earned their bread and butter through the theatre. To save these people from starvation, government established Federal Theatre which had nation-wide range. After Graduation in 1938, Miller joined the Federal Theatre. The Federal Theatre Project was closed by the Congress in 1939. Now Miller started working in Brooklyn Navy Yard and continued to write radio plays which were broadcast on CBS.

The Man Who Had All the Luck (1944) was Miller’s first Broadway play. It was not a success. This failure frustrated him and he tried his hand at novel writing. He wrote Focus (1945) which throws light on anti-Semitism. The novel proved a grand success. He returned to theatre with his play All My Sons (1947). It was produced by Harold Clurman; Elia Kazan
directed it. The play opened on January 29, 1947; it was a great success, and won New York Drama Circle Critics’ Award. As a result of success on the stage, he got sudden wealth, but his radical views made him feel guilty for his sudden wealth; so he took up a job in a factory which he could not continue for more than a week. He says, “I couldn’t think of myself any longer as being allied to the working class because the working class were busy being middle class” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 2).

In *All My Sons*, protagonist of the play, Joe Keller, is a businessman. He is only concerned with the welfare of his family. Market forces in contemporary industrial society do not bother about the propriety of means. Joe does not bother about his bad conduct in performing his business activities. While commenting on the vile nature of market values, Thomas E. Porter observes, “A culture built on the market system and the rule of law cannot escape the value it inculcates. The mills of the gods are created by the chilling recognition that many Americans are not in control of their own destiny and that they have no one to blame but themselves” (96). Joe defends his actions because he is governed and supported by market values and market ethos of earning private profit even by foul means. Actually, in market ethos, it is the ends which matter, not the means. Thus, Arthur Miller expresses his severe indictment of market system, market forces and market values through *All My Sons*.

With the success of *All My Sons*, Commercial theatre of Broadway had recognised the merit of Arthur Miller. After *All My Sons* came *Death of a Salesman* at the time of economic boom. The play depicts a strong urge for success, money, name and fame. The play deals with the life of Willy Loman, a salesman in the industrial age, who throughout his life hankers after the realisation of the myth of success but in vain. *Death of a Salesman* was a box office success and won him New York Drama Circle Critics’ Award (1949) for the best play of the season, and Pulitzer Prize (1949). As regards *Death of a Salesman*, Jean Gould makes a significant observation:
Here the playwright not only placed on trial the moral values of his central character – Willy Loman the salesman – but a society that by competition compels its individuals to forsake native talents in favour of achieving material success, at the price of human dignity. Willy Loman might have been a superb craftsman, but he is forced by the demands of a mechanised world to run pantingly in search of the will-o’-the-wisp, financial wealth. He takes on the vapid, superficial life of the salesman, the false heartiness, the emptiness, the loneliness, covered up by colossal bluff, the fleeting pleasure of a sportive fling, and the anodyne of alcohol. (252-253)

In 1950s anti-communist hysteria bred by McCarthyism in America was instrumental in political witch-hunt of communists. The witch-hunt was carried out by HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee). It was a committee of the House of Representatives which started witch-hunt of the present and former communists, and their fellow workers and fellow travellers. Cold war was at its peak, and fear of communism had permeated the psyche of the American society. Communists in America posed mortal threat to democracy and capitalism. Lasswell observes, “In periods of crisis it is peculiarly necessary to identify enemies of democracy” (175). Writers, actors, and directors were expected to write or act in favour of democracy. Any talk of communism or socialism on the part of writers, actors, and directors was anathema to the McCarthy politicians. Lasswell further says, “The balance of what we read, see and hear needs to be strongly tilted on the side of democracy. . . . We cannot afford to be complacent in the presence of news and comment that undermine our fundamental faith and practice” (176).

Miller wrote *The Crucible* in 1953 which “is generally regarded as one of the greatest plays of the twentieth century. In the 1950s and 60s, it played to millions of Americans as a morality play, warning theatergoers of the dangers of mass hysteria in hunting ‘witches’ in
the same way that Congressman Joseph McCarthy and his House Committee on Un-American Activities hunted alleged ‘Communists’” (Goss 78). In order to expose the evil of Fascist trend in the contemporary American society in the form of HUAC, Miller went back to the Salem witch trials of 1692 America in *The Crucible*. In this play, he reminded the American people in particular and the world in general of the evil designs and evil consequences of the contemporary McCarthy witch-hunt. As regards political overtones in *The Crucible*, it is pertinent to point out that witch-hunt in Salem created mass hysteria, and the individual had to make a false confession before a court which was prejudiced in favour of witch-hunters in society. During witch-hunt trials Salem was governed by theocracy. Contemporary similarity of the Salem trials lies in the fact that at the time of McCarthy trials too, in 1950s, mass hysteria was generated, and individuals were pressurised and coerced to confess their allegiance to communism, and to save themselves from punishment, they were asked to name the fellow travellers.

Bentley does not find any parallel between the Salem witch-hunt trials in 1692 and McCarthy witch-hunt of communists in 1960’s. He observes, “You may say of *The Crucible* that it isn’t about McCarthy, it’s about love in the seventeenth century” (261). However, to seek only love and ignore political aspect in *The Crucible* is simply to overlook the political implications of the Salem witch-trials, which are very relevant to explore and evaluate the motivations and objectives which McCarthy and his cohorts had in mind while generating mass hysteria against communists in America simply to punish the adherents or sympathisers of communist ideology. Joseph Wood Krutch, in a very convincing manner, finds parallel or similarity between Salem witch-hunt trials and McCarthy witch-hunt of communists. His observation merits our serious attention. Krutch is of the opinion that while writing *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller had McCarthy trials at the back of his mind: “*The Crucible* laid its
scene at the time of the Salem witchcraft trials with the obvious intention of drawing a parallel between them and the ‘security trials’ of the present day” (325).

Krutch’s comments actually express the general reaction of those who did not approve of the victimisation of communists in the name of danger to national security. Gascoigne finds similarity of a deeper significance between the Salem witch-hunt and the McCarthy witch-hunt and concludes that both trials generated “mass hysteria.” The crux of the matter is that both trials generated fear in the psyche of individual and society:

The Crucible’s validity in no sense depends on the validity of the parallel, though it is understandable that the date of its appearance, 1953, should have made its first critics judge it by the narrow standards of topicality. Its only connection with the security trials is that Miller’s own experience of the McCarthy scare (and he has described how his friends were soon cutting him in the streets) was the stimulus for a play about mass hysteria and the individual caught up in its evil. (Gascoigne 178)

Towards the end of 1950s, Miller wrote A View from the Bridge which highlights betrayal and lack of responsibility at personal and social level. It also introduces Greek tragedy’s chorus in the form of Alfieri. Further, this play introduces the revengeful attitude of Italian community of tribal nature. After writing A View from the Bridge in 1955, Miller kept silent or remained absent from the theatre for a period of nine years. He broke his silence in 1964 with After the Fall which unfortunately did not find favour with the New York Reviewers. The play, primarily, involves relationship of the protagonist Quentin with his mother and men and women who came in his contact during his life. He deals with the theme of guilt and innocence, guilt and responsibility; and that nobody can claim innocence after the
Biblical Fall of Man. Next came Miller’s play *Incident at Vichy*. It also deals with the theme of guilt and responsibility, and relationship among human beings based on love and hate.

*After the Fall* and *Incident at Vichy* highlight the question of Holocaust, Fascism, human betrayal, degradation in the contemporary political scenario, and moral bankruptcy of man in relation to others. These plays also point out. In the end of sixties came *The Price* which draws attention to the adverse impact of Economic Depression on family and social relationships in contemporary America. Miller was of the opinion that art should resist the forces which caused Economic Depression and Holocaust. He did not want to “make art complicit with the forces” of Depression and Holocaust. Regarding the impact of Depression and Holocaust on Miller’s mind, and the role of art and artist in the face of such formidable challenges, Christopher Bigsby comments:

The fact is that two events, above all, proved definitional for Miller – the Depression and Holocaust. One changed a particular model of social organisation, a national myth, and interpretation of history; the other seemed to destroy the very meaning of the individual and the concept of society as a network of sustaining obligation. . . . Viewed in one way the ironies of the theatre of the absurd (as presented by Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco) were a logical response. But for Miller this was to make art complicit with the forces it existed to resist. In the presence of such defining events, art, Miller implies, has a special responsibility. It either accommodates itself to, acquiesces in, social and metaphysical irony or resists it. And in that context theatre becomes central as a direct expression of a fundamental community of mutually dependent individuals. (Introduction 4-5)
Towards the end of sixties, America was a grand stage of demonstrations, public rallies and marches, social and political conflicts against America’s military intervention in Vietnam. Miller vehemently abhorred, despised, and criticised America’s military intervention in Vietnam. He declared this act as a “criminal engagement which showed a side of American civilisation, I would rather not think about” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 5). In 1968, Miller attended National Democratic Party Convention and mobilised delegates against war in Vietnam. He became the President of an international organisation of writers known as PEN, and raised his voice against victimisation and imprisonment of writers including Solzhenitsyn of Soviet Union.

Towards the end of seventies, Miller wrote The Archbishop’s Ceiling, which depicts his experience in 1970’s in Czechoslovakia where the room of his hotel was bugged with microphones by government spies. He had a meeting with the writers in this room, but the writers remained fully alert and conscious of the presence of unseen listeners; therefore, to save themselves from the eyes and ears of the spies, they had to manipulate language which carried double meaning, though this manipulation of language may not be treated as a healthy characteristic of the art and artist. It refers to the totalitarian tendencies of the contemporary powers. US President Richard Nixon during seventies had himself bugged his own office. Totalitarian tendencies in America; and communist regimes in Europe and USSR had badly affected relations between man and state. This phenomenon posed a pertinent problem and question – how to define reality. In 1984 he told the audience of National Theatre in London: “. . . what I’ve become more and more fascinated by is the question of reality and what it is, and whether there is any, and how one invites it into oneself, that’s a moral issue, finally” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 6).

In 1972, Miller wrote The Creation of the World and Other Business. The play primarily depicts that God is unjust, cruel, and villain; it is God who created
misunderstanding and bad blood between Abel and Cain. Relationship between man and God is not cordial. Cain is unhappy with God. Cain rightly says, “When God repents His injustice, I will repent my own!” (Miller, The Creation of the World and Other Business 97).

Miller wrote screen version of Fania Fenelon’s book Playing for Time (1980). It celebrated the instinct to survive and courage to face horrors. Half-Jewish singer Fania, who was sent to Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz, says, “I’ve always had to have an aim in life . . . something I wanted to do next. That’s what we need now if we’re ever to get out of here alive” (Miller, Playing for Time 16).

Elegy for a Lady and Some Kind of Love Story were produced in 1982; and in 1987 two more one-act plays I Can’t Remember Anything and Clara were staged. About renewed interest in Miller’s plays – All My Sons, A View from the Bridge, and The Archbishop’s Ceiling – in 1986 onwards in Europe and England, Arthur Miller in an interview on November 18, 1986 comments, “It may be that the social and moral concerns in those plays are now on the agenda again. For a long time, there was an affectation to the effect that no judgements could be made about anything. Of course, these plays, implicitly or explicitly, create a moral universe. And maybe that’s new” (Gussow 68).

While dealing with relationships in his plays, Miller’s obsession with the past in play after play is not simply a prank, whim or gimmick of an eccentric, but the conscious effort of a committed social dramatist who treated past as the integral link in the chain of time, and decried and denounced the tendency of the Americans to deny history or wipe out the past. And past also carried some sort of lesson or warnings so that we may not repeat the blunders of severing our connection with moral values and social responsibilities. Bigsby writes, “Growing up alongside his father and grandfather, both from Poland, the past existed for him [Miller] as present fact. That simple truth lies behind virtually all of his work as he resists the
American desire to deny history in the name of future which contains the essence of its promise of new beginning” (Introduction 4-5).

American authors, in general, are prone to ignoring the past, as if they have no roots, ancestors, cultural background, and they perceived their beginning with themselves. Miller hits at this tendency of American artists and writers in an eloquent and ironical manner. American writer treats himself “as though the tongue had been cut out of the past, leaving him alone to begin from the beginning, from the creation and the first naming of things seen for the first time. . . . American writers spring as though from the ground itself – or drop out of the air all new and self-conceived and self-made, quite like the businessman they despise” (Miller, Timebends 114-115). Miller was never in favour of rejecting, denying or ignoring the past. Past was not just for the sake of past, but he was reminded of past in terms of moral responsibility of individual and society, and state. His objective also remained to highlight and establish the moral responsibility. Bigsby rightly remarks:

Miller has spoken of his concern to penetrate his own feelings about himself and the times in which he lived. It is in that sense that he sees Willy Loman as a representative figure because he, as Miller once remarked, carried in his pocket the ‘coinage of our day’ (Miller, Timebends 176) but Willy Loman has a past and for Miller the present moment always has a history. Nor is it simply that he hears echoes of the past, so that the anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950’s, for example, can be seen to be a re-enactment of the witch-hunts of colonial New England. It is that, believing in a moral world in which actions have consequences for which individual and state must be held accountable, it becomes necessary to dramatize causality in the lives of his characters. It is in that sense that the job of the artist . . . is to remind people of what they have chosen to forget. (Arthur Miller and Company 200)
In Death of a Salesman, After the Fall and The American Clock, Miller brings past into play simply because we carry past in our head and this very past is the substance of our present. Past carries moral relevance for the present. It is in the light of this significance of the past that Miller says, “I’ve come out of the playwriting tradition which is Greek and Ibsen where the past is the burden of man and it’s got to be placed on the stage so that he can grapple with it. That’s the way these plays are built. It’s now grappling with them, it’s the story of how the birds came home to roost” (qtd. in Bigsby, Arthur Miller and Company 201).

Miller, in The Crucible, The Archbishop’s Ceiling and Incident at Vichy, lays emphasis on human fallibility in affairs of the state. If public behaviour is corrupt, it is projection of private flaws. Christopher Bigsby says:

For Miller there are if not realities then urgencies, and beneath the contingencies of the body politic a skeleton structure of individual human relationships. . . . Private and public history alike begin and end with the individual, with the self. Miller’s characters are deeply flawed. That is what led him to speak of modern tragedy, but that flaw is the essence of their humanity. (Introduction 8)

Thus, we find individual at the centre of the private and public postures in Miller’s plays. Moral flaws found in individual get prominence in his plays. Individual’s self interest comes into conflict with the public interest. Miller says, “. . . the way I see, there are no public issues; they are all private issues.” (qtd. in Bigsby, Introduction 8). Further, virus of denial and betrayal is found in both individual and society. Bigsby observes:

The dilemma of Willy Loman, of John Proctor, and of Phillip Gellburg, has to do with the substance and integrity of their identities, yet the battles which
they wage with themselves are related to larger issues. Denial and betrayal are marks not only of the individual but of a society whose leaders deny that very mutuality which is their justification for existence. (Introduction 8)

Actually, Holocaust lurks behind The Crucible and After the Fall; and Incident at Vichy, and Broken Glass treat it as the subject matter of the play. Miller’s takes up the issue of Holocaust in his plays because of “his commitment to reinventing the moral world whose historical irrelevance was declared so peremptorily merely sixty years ago. The lessons which he learned from Depression, as the familiar world dissolved leaving only the necessities of survival, were projected to some ultimate point in Nazi Germany” (Bigsby, Introduction 8).

Arthur Miller’s importance as a playwright is based on his emphasis on issues and themes involving relationships which cover family, society, economy and politics. These issues determine the fate of the individual and freewill also operates within the constraints of deterministic factors. One is free to choose from among the choices provided by the deterministic forces. This does not mean that freewill would not challenge or transcend the choices offered by the deterministic forces. In A View from the Bridge, Eddie Carbone refuses to settle for half, that is, to accept his fault that he had violated the community norm of solidarity by deceiving the Italian relatives of his wife. Had he accepted his guilt and realised the fact that it was his own action of informing the immigration authorities against the illegal entry into US of Rodolpho and Marco and his betrayal of these relatives which had sullied his name, it is quite possible that the things would have been different. Further, in The Incident at Vichy, deterministic forces offer two apparent choices to Prince Von Berg; he may endorse the fascist political line of the Nazi government of Hitler and may earn the goodwill of the political ruling clique of the Nazis; or he may remain indifferent to the genocide of the Jews, that is, he could remain silent spectator of the Holocaust; but the Prince overruled the choices offered by the deterministic forces and asserted his freewill to exhibit
solidarity with the Jews; the Prince gave his White Pass to the Jew doctor, Leduc while putting his own life in danger.

It goes to Arthur Miller’s credit that he has been consistent in expounding the thematic concerns in his plays through articles in various journals and newspapers, introductions to his plays, and interviews to newspapers and radio. He wrote social drama with a purpose to highlight the awareness of man’s role in society. His plays mainly focus on the protagonists’ failure or success in the awareness of their role towards family and society. About social aspect and thematic concern of his plays, Miller says that man should get rid of isolation and alienation. As a dramatist his endeavour was to relate individual to society. At the same time his intention was “to make man more human.” Miller says:

These plays, in one sense, are my response to what was ‘in the air’, and they are one man’s way of saying to his fellow men, ‘This is what you see every day, or think or feel; now I will show you what you really know but have not had the time, or the disinterestedness, or the insight, or the information to understand consciously’. Each of these plays, in varying degrees, was begun in the belief that it was unveiling a truth already known but unrecognized as such. My concept of the audience is of a public each member of which is carrying preoccupation which is his alone and isolates him from mankind; and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of revelation of his mutuality with them. . . . I regard the theater as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say, less alone. (Collected Plays 11)

Due to Economic Depression of thirties, there was unprecedented resentment against the market forces unleashed by capitalist industrialism, and writers with leftist leanings wrote
social drama highlighting ills of industrial capitalism and advocated their Marxist solutions. Arthur Miller’s predecessor Clifford Odets wrote the following plays based on Marxist ideology – *Awake and Sing* (1934), *Waiting for Lefty* (1935), *Paradise Lost* (1936), *Golden Boy* (1937), and *Rocket to the Moon* (1938). During his university days, Miller happened to visit Chicago and saw a performance of Clifford Odets’ *Awake and Sing*. This play made a deep and lasting impression on Miller’s career as a dramatist:

(The telling line, ‘Go out and fight so life shouldn’t be printed on dollar bills,’ seemed to epitomise the attitude of the thirties toward the false ideals of the twenties.) He thought a great deal about the change the Depression had wrought in his family, as in so many others. He considered the values that had caused so many Wall Street suicides when men were forced to face financial failure. (Gould 249)

In the plays which Miller wrote during his university days, he set the tone and tenor of his future plays, that is, he was to lay emphasis on moral responsibility of the individual within and outside the family and severe indictment of free enterprise and free market concept which did not bother about moral responsibility towards society:

He was forming the concepts of moral responsibility within the family which were to furnish the central themes of his plays, particularly, the relationship between the father and son. Extending from there to the family of man, he placed the responsibility for the general welfare of the masses, or the individual; it was therefore, immoral for one man to amass great wealth at the expense of the many, and it was immoral to hold financial, material wealth the yardstick of a successful life. This in turn led him to an appraisal of the injustices, the sins committed in the name of ‘free enterprise’, the tendency to
condone any means to achieve success. In his plays Arthur Miller was to question and to sit in judgement against the false values of the past and present, as yet a distant outcome of his college years, but already clearly outlined in his early manuscript plays. (Gould 249-250)

Miller as a social commentator tread the path laid down by Clifford Odets but with a difference that he remains inclined to liberal humanism. As a matter of fact in his plays he was critical of McCarthy witch-hunt of communists in America; but he was also critical of Stalin and his cohorts who had crushed individual liberty under their feet. One of the most important critical essays Miller wrote is entitled “On Social Plays”. This essay served as an introduction to A View from the Bridge (1955 edition). The essay reveals Miller’s concept of “whole drama” and “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54). Gerald Weales remarks:

Although there is a kind of vagueness about the essay, as there is so much of Miller’s critical writing, it does make clear that he believes that the serious playwright must write social drama. For him, however, the genre is not simply “an arrangement of society’s evils”. The term social drama which he calls the Whole Drama must recognise that man has a subjective and an objective existence that he belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond. This definition fits the four plays that made Miller famous – All My Sons (1947), Death of a Salesman (1949), The Crucible (1953) and A View from the Bridge (1955). With a shift in emphasis it also fits the two plays produced in 1964. (96)

As a consequence of his faith in subjective and objective existence of man, Miller deals with his characters at psychological and social levels. Characters are portrayed with
their identity and image in society. Conflict between individual’s interests and social values is the hallmark of Miller’s plays. He does not individual to remain isolated from society:

If a playwright is to be concerned with both psychological man and social man, as Miller’s definition of social drama says he must, he is inevitably forced to deal with the problem of identity. This is what Miller has always written about, and it is as clearly the subject of Incident at Vichy as it is of All My Sons. In Miller’s early works, each of his heroes is involved in a struggle which results from his acceptance for his rejection of an image of himself – an image that grows out of the values and the prejudices of his society. That society may be as narrow as Eddie Carbone’s neighbourhood in A View from the Bridge or as wide as contemporary America that helped form the Willy Loman we meet in Death of a Salesman. (Weales 96-97)

At the time of publication of his essay “On Social Plays” in 1955, theatre in the United States was preoccupied with the individual and its psychological analysis. Social context did not find place in the plays, it was limited to the boundaries of the family, Miller endeavoured to expand the vision of theatre. He told that Greek dramatists had interest in psychology and character but “for him these were means to a larger end and the end was what we isolate today as social. That is, the relation of man as a social animal rather than his definition as a separated entity, was the dramatic goal” (“On Social Plays,” 51).

Miller opines that integration of the psychological and the social was Greek dramatists’ marvellous contribution to the domain of drama. Miller argues that the value of drama increases “as it deals with more and more of the whole man, not either his subjective or his social life alone, and the Greek was unable to conceive of man or anything else except as a whole” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54).
Thus, the concept of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54) treats man not in isolation from society. This concept given by Greeks treats individual as integral part of society. A man achieves the status of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54) only when he realises that he is responsible to society for the actions he performs. Murphy rightly remarks, “The wholeness or integration could be achieved by the individual only when the individual considered himself as a citizen of an entity larger than the nuclear family” (11).

Individual’s relationship with family and further with society is marked by conflict between the interests of individual, interests of family, and interests of society. However, characters in Miller’s plays are forced to identify and evaluate themselves in terms of society, and thus the conflict between individual and society resolves in the realisation of individual’s social identity, duty, and responsibility. As Miller criticises the contemporary American society, he traces the concept of the “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54) in the Greek drama. He observes:

In Greece, the tragic victory consisted in demonstrating that the polis – the whole people – had discovered some aspect of the Grand Design which also was the right way to live together. If the American playwrights of serious intent are in anyway the sub-conscience of the country, our claims to have found that way are less than proved. For when the Greek thought of the right way to live it was a whole concept; it meant a way to live that would create citizens who were brave in a war, had a sense of responsibility to the polis in peace, and were also developed as individual personalities. (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 55)

Thus, it is amply clear that in Greek drama there was a lot of emphasis on individual’s responsibility towards society during war and peace, and in being responsible to state and
society for his conduct and actions, he also gained a highly dignified stature as individual in society, and as integral part of society. We can safely presume that in Greek drama individual was not allowed to shirk his social responsibility. And it is through the performance of social responsibility that he attained the stature and status of the “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54).

In Miller’s plays we come across heroes who are very touchy about their self respect, honour, and dignity in their family, and their name and respect in society. Due to guilt and betrayal on their part they lose their respectable status in family, and name in society. And in order to regain their respect and name, the heroes in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman commit suicide and in A View from the Bridge the hero, Eddie Carbone, challenges the offender, Marco; the hero fights against the offender, and ultimately meets a heroic end. Gascoigne remarks, “The respect which Miller’s heroes long for is not so much their own as society’s. Give me my ‘name’, they all insist. The individuality they crave must be endorsed by their neighbours” (176).

Miller addresses both psychological and social aspects of man which impart wholeness to the personality of his characters. However, over and above the psychological and social factors, Miller seems to suggest that “innate will” (Collected Plays 54) in man is of supreme importance. Miller argues:

Any determinism, even the most scientific, is only that stasis, that seemingly endless pause, before the application of man’s will administering a new insight into causation. . . . The idea of realism has become wedded to the idea that man is at best the sum of forces working upon him and of given psychological forces within him. Yet an innate value, an innate will, does in fact posit itself as real not alone because it is devoutly to be wished, but because, however
closely he is measured and systematically accounted for, he is more than the sum of his stimuli and is unpredictable beyond a certain point. . . . that we are made and yet are more than what made us. (Collected Plays 54-55)

Arthur Miller’s plays carry universal appeal. On the face of it, the plays depict trials and errors, shocks and agonies of contemporary American society, but at a deeper level, they touch the core of contemporary industrial civilisation in terms of individual, family and society. His vision of family is vast enough to encompass the whole world:

Like O’Neill, Miller always relates the family to larger context, society and the world, his constant theme being “how may a man make of the outside world a home . . . to find the safety, the surrounding of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honor which . . . [all] have connected in their memories with the idea of family?” (Griffin xi)

Miller’s plays have touched the hearts and minds of the audiences throughout the world. Family relations in Miller’s plays are crucial to the understanding of his thematic concerns which include human society as a whole:

Miller writes of familial love and its conflicts in terms that stir the minds and emotions of audiences not only in English-speaking nations but also in Brazil and Russia, Iceland and China. When Miller, directing Death of a Salesman in Beijing, explained to the Chinese actor of Biff the son’s feelings of guilt and unrequited love for his father, the actor replied that he understood, because it is very Chinese. (Griffin xi)

Miller had to face uncharitable criticism of reviewers who, at first sight, charged him of topicality, meaning thereby that he lacked any broader or deeper vision of life. In fact, he
wanted the participation of his audiences or readers in all that he had revealed to them through his plays. He exposed the grim reality of his times and, thus, exhorted his audience to think over and evaluate the things:

Despite moving some audiences to tears, Miller insists on making his readers and viewers think. He delights as with *The Price*, in dialectical dialogue that forces the audience to come to its own conclusions: “I don’t let you off the hook . . . you want me to tell you what to think.” He writes about “what is in the air”, but the plays transcend the topicality that prompted them. Yet that topicality was only what some short-sighted reviewers saw when the plays first appeared. (Griffin xii)

Freedom of expression, civil rights, and human rights are the very basis of American constitution. These principles influenced Miller’s personal and artistic life. Protagonists in his plays and his own confrontation with McCarthy, capitalism, and communism depict his political concerns. It is in the light of these ideas and principles that he did not approve of McCarthy witch-hunt and American military intervention in Vietnam in 1960s. He also did not approve of curbs on freedom of expression during the cold war in the countries of Eastern Europe. His plays *The Crucible*, *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*, and *Incident at Vichy* highlight the tyranny and authoritarian tendencies of state power. Protagonists in these plays uphold the banner of revolt against the tyranny of the state power. They remain steadfast in their belief in freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and democratic principles of life:

If social drama is about society, then political drama is about its dynamic: its struggles, its dialectic, and its evolution. In his plays, Miller explored power relations with regard to individuals and communities, while outside of the theatre, he sustained an active engagement in the political life of the theatre
and film milieu, in American society as it responded to events from the Depression to the contested presidential election of 2000, and in the struggle for freedom of expression around globe. The arc of his writing and his involvement in real-world struggles suggest an intensely political sensibility that drove his perception of community and shaped his theater. (Mason 2)

In 1950s Arthur Miller had to face political onslaught from McCarthy and his cohorts, who charged Miller and a number of other prominent writers of un-American activities. Actually, MacCarthyism was an attack on individual’s conscience and individual’s liberty. Senator McCarthy propagated the view that communists had penetrated the government positions in civil administration, military, and fields of arts and culture. According to him, the communists posed a serious threat to the American way of life. Reign of McCarthy terror was let loose on the writers, actors, producers, and directors. These men of art and culture were summoned before the investigating committee of the Congress. They were forced to confess to their Marxist leanings; they were also forced to name those who had attended the party meetings. Even those liberals who by their nature, sympathised with the socialist principles were named and punished. Those who confessed to their socialist principles and named others publically were cleared of the charges. But those who refused to name others were victimised and punished. They lost their jobs as actors and directors. Radio-stations and television companies also boycotted them. In short, those who refused to sell their conscience to the investigating committee of the Congress were deprived of their livelihoods. It was in the light of this reign of McCarthy terror that Miller thought it proper to write the adaptation of Ibsen’s play An Enemy of the People because the theme of the play reflected the “moment in America – the need, if not the holy right, to resist the pressure to conform” (Miller, Timebends 324). Miller’s play The Crucible was staged on Broadway in 1953, but the reviewers attacked it because Salem witch-hunt in this play was seen as the indictment of
McCarthy witch-hunt. However, in intellectual circles throughout the world, Miller was hailed as the champion of the freedom of expression and crusader for the cause of man’s conscience. In 1956, Miller applied for the renewal of his passport, but he was asked to appear before the HUAC to clear his name; only then his passport could be renewed. Miller’s statement before the committee reminds us of John Proctor’s statement in *The Crucible*. John Proctor refused to name others. Similarly, Miller also refused to name others:

> I want you to understand that I am not protecting the communists or the communist party. I am trying to and I will protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of other person and bring trouble on him. . . . I take the responsibility for everything I have ever done, but cannot take responsibility for another human being. (qtd. in Griffin15)

Miller was found guilty of contempt and sentenced to thirty days imprisonment. He appealed against the decision of HUAC and it took him two years to win the case.

It is the concept of family which exhorts Miller to exhibit moral concern for an ordered and coherent world. Role of father, being the head of family is of crucial importance. And it is the moral concerns which generate in father-son relationship. Morally reprehensible behaviour of Willy in *Death of a Salesman* and Joe Keller’s in *All My Sons* is bitterly criticised by the sons. Father is considered to be the epitome of virtue; loss of virtue in father amounts to loss of moral order in family and society:

> From *The Man Who Had All the Luck* through *Death of a Salesman*, the father stands for virtue and value; to his sons he is the personification of Right and Truth. In *All My Sons*, Chris cries out against his father’s (Joe Keller’s) delinquency. “I know you’re no worse than other men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man: I saw as my father.” Joe Keller expresses
idealisation of the father-son relationship when he exclaims, “I’m his father and he’s my son. Nothing is bigger than that.” (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 145)

In Miller’s plays father is the symbol and reservoir of moral authority and the moment father falters on moral plain, father-son relationship enters the zone of conflict, and the crisis deepens and the father, ultimately, sacrifices himself at the altar of moral order:

The shock which shatters Miller’s dramatic cosmos always begins with the father’s inability to enact the role of moral authority the son assigns to him and which the father willy-nilly assumes. The son never altogether absolves the father for his defection nor is the father ever able to forgive himself for it. Each bears a heavy burden of responsibility to the other. Both may be innocent, but both suffer guilt. (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 145)

It is somewhat intriguing on the part of Harold Clurman to treat flawed fathers as innocent too. Moral flaw in Willy harms the family and moral flaw in Keller harms both family and society. As the fathers violate moral order which governs the relationships in family and society, they should not be treated as innocent. About family and social relationships, Miller rightly remarks:

The concepts of father and mother and so on were received by us unawares before the time we were conscious of ourselves as selves. In contrast, the concepts of Friend, Teacher, Employee, Boss, Colleague, Supervisor, and the many other social relations came to us long after we have gained consciousness of ourselves, and are therefore outside ourselves. They are thus in an objective rather than a subjective category. In any case what we feel is always more “real” to us than what we know, and we feel the family
relationship while we only know the social one. (“The Family in Modern Drama” 81)

Thus, family relations are based on feelings, and social relations on knowing. Family relations are subjective whereas social relations are objective. In order to protect ourselves from the onslaught of objective reality of social and economic forces of the contemporary industrial world, Miller refers to subjective reality of family relations. Family relations are based on the principle of familial solidarity, and the pivot of this solidarity is wife or mother in the house. For example, in *Death of a Salesman*, Linda acts as pivot. She works for the solidarity of family. She is aware of the fault of her husband Willy and her sons Biff and Happy, and maintains a sympathetic, understanding, emotional and compassionate attitude to maintain unity in family. At times, she is very stern and harsh with her sons when she finds lack of sensitivity in their attitude towards their father. As and when moral or economic crisis bedevil the peace and solidarity of family, it is women characters in the plays of Miller who always endeavour to maintain peace and harmony in the family. Linda in *Death of a Salesman* and Rose in *The American Clock* play a praiseworthy role during financial crisis in their families.

Post-war America felt threatened due to the spread of communism in Asia and Europe, and fear of subversive activities at home created a situation of panic in American society reminiscent of witch-hunt in seventeenth century. American intellectuals, writers and politicians who professed communism were fined, jailed and executed:

The success of Communism abroad and fear of its subversive policies at home destabilised the political consensus and implicitly initiated a debate about those very qualities and values which were presumably at stake. And with the collapse of a consensus created originally by the economic necessities of the
1930s and the political requirements of war, individual and groups themselves increasingly alienated. The assault on New Deal liberals, the barely concealed anti-Semitism of many of the attackers on supposed subversive, the distrust of intellectuals associated in the minds of HUAC investigators, right-wing politicians and a number of industrialists, with a betrayal of American values created a condition in which a writer like Miller was bound to find himself increasingly at odds with the model of America which that implied. The first evidence of this, apart from his novel, was Death of a Salesman, which placed the whole question of American values at the centre of his attention. And subsequently came The Crucible, which challenged head-on the corrupting influence of those who would enforce their own model of national purpose and personal morality on others. (Bigsby, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama 172-173)

Harold Clurman traces the roots of repression of McCarthy era to the reforms of the thirties and early forties in America. He refers to Miller’s radicalism and righteousness of thirties and forties which boomeranged in the form of McCarthy repression. Actually, it was Clifford Odets’ Awake and Sing! which reflected the mind of people in thirties and early forties. “Go out and fight so life shouldn’t be printed on dollar bills” (Odets 48) followed by “Life should have some dignity” (Odets 70) was the key not of the period. During his college days, Miller was deeply influenced by Marxist ideology. He was also very impressed by Odets’ play Awake and Sing!. It may be said that “sweet, dumb, nobly ignoble Willy never learns anything. But Miller, and the men of his generation, had begun to. Miller became a ‘radical’” (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 146). He “seeks the maintenance of individual dignity within the contexts of the family which broadens to the concept of society as a whole” (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 146). In All My Sons “is a moraliser, a
preacher” (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 146). He “virtually wills his fathers punishment” (Clurman, “Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 147) because his moral wisdom does not allow him to condone his father’s complicity in supplying defective cylinder heads to the American Army Air Force. About righteousness Harold Clurman observes:

The severity of such righteousness often boomerangs. The reforms of the thirties and early forties were followed by the repressions of the fifties. Miller spoke out courageously against the forces of repression. The Crucible, written between 1952 and 1953, is still a virile protest against the aberration of McCarthyism. (“Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,” 147)

Even if we admit that radicalism and self-righteousness of thirties and forties boomeranged, it goes to the credit of Miller that he neither supported private profit at the cost of public interest in All My Sons, nor the attack on individual conscience on the part of state in The Crucible. He remained steadfast in his devotion to the principle of moral responsibility towards society in All My Sons and exhibited unflinching faith in retaining individual conscience in The Crucible even at the cost of one’s life.

Miller seems to be of the view that social setup plays dominant role in deciding the fate of personal relationships. Pulls and pressures of a given social setup remain beyond the control of the individual. It is the social order which affects the personal relationships:

It is not man as an isolated individual, that Miller is concerned with but man in relation to others in a given social order; tortured, disillusioned, thwarted and driven to disaster by the forces of that world of which he is member. Quentin moves across the stage as a free and detached individual, in relation to his wives, but as a member of that society in which those personal relationships flourish and fail. (Bhatia 96)
Victor in *The Price*, stands for human solidarity in the face of adverse economic circumstances in life. He leaves the college and does a policeman’s job to maintain his father’s faith in human solidarity during the economic Depression of 1929 in America. Further, it was because of love of his family and moral responsibility towards the family that he decided to give up the idea of pursuing his college education and became a cop. Victor’s attitude suggests that in a family we should share each other’s problems; we are supposed to live for each other; but Walter is just antithesis of Victor in the sense that he decides to pursue his medical career; he is least concerned with the impact of Depression on family’s fortunes. Victor is selfless, but Walter is selfish.

Robert W. Corrigan refers to Dr. Erikson’s psychological biography *Young Man Luther* to trace the development of Miller’s characters:

Dr. Erikson postulates the idea that in the lives of most people there are normally three periods of psychological crisis: the crisis of Identity, the crisis of Generativity, and the crisis of integrity. These crises, he maintains, generally occur in youth, middle age, and old age respectively, although there is always some overlapping and the pattern does vary slightly from individual to individual. (Introduction 2)

Miller’s plays which belong to the period ranging from 1944 to 1957 depict crisis of identity. Protagonists in *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), and *A View from the Bridge* (1955) fail to identify themselves, that is, their selves, with the deterministic socio-economic structure and system of society and community. According to Dr. Erikson’s views, the crisis of identity in the case of the protagonists should have been resolved in their youths failing which they invite their doom:
Strange as it may sound, Joe Keller, Willy Loman, John Proctor, and Eddie Carbone are alike, caught up in a problem of identity that is normally characteristic of youth (one is almost tempted to say adolescent), and their deaths are caused by their lack of self-understanding. In every case this blindness is in large measure due to their failure to have resolved the question of identity at an earlier and more appropriate time in life. (Corrigan, “The Achievement of Arthur Miller,” 28)

Protagonists in Miller’s plays fail to connect themselves with social norms and suffer tragic consequences of their actions. About Joe Keller in All My Sons, Miller says, “Joe Keller’s trouble . . . is not that he cannot tell right from wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with this world, his universe, or his society. . . . The fortress which All My Sons lays siege to is the fortress of unrelatedness” (qtd. in Zeifman 108).

Miller in his play “A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE . . . continued his exploration of the tragedy of the common man. This time his hero is a hard-working Sicilian longshoreman who is killed because he breaks the community’s law of silence about some illegal immigrants” (Wilmeth 440). In view of betrayal of community’s norm in A View from the Bridge by Eddie, Miller says in an interview:

What kills Eddie Carbone is nothing visible or heard, but the built-in conscience of the community whose existence he has menaced by betraying it . . . A solidarity that may be primitive but which finally administers a self-preserving blow against its violators. In A View from the Bridge there is a search for some fundamental fiat, not moral in itself but ultimately so, which
keeps a certain order among us, enough to keep us from barbarism. (qtd. in Bigsby, *Modern American Drama – 1945-2000* 98)

Thus, Miller suggests that one has to remain connected and loyal to social norms. One should refrain from violating social norms because in case of violation or betrayal of these norms, one would invite violent reaction in the form of harsh punishment, as we see in the case of Joe Keller in *All My Sons* and Eddie Carbone in *A View From the Bridge*. Thus, lack of successful connection with society or violation of social restriction amounts to tragic flaw in the protagonists of Miller’s plays. Robert W. Corrigan rightly remarks:

Each of the plays written prior to *The Misfits*, is a judgement of a man’s failure to maintain a viable connection with the surrounding world because he does not know himself. The verdict is always guilty and it is a verdict based upon Miller’s belief that if each man faced up to the truth about himself, he could be fulfilled as an individual and still live within the restrictions of society. But while Miller’s judgements are absolute, they are also exceedingly complex. There is no doubt that he finally stands four-square on the side of the community, but until the moment when justice must be served, his sympathies are for the most part directed toward those ordinary little men who never discovered who they really were. (Introduction 3)

It is pertinent to note that protagonists at the level of family fail to project themselves flawlessly. Husbands in *Death of a Salesman* and *A View from the Bridge* fail the test of fidelity; Willy is caught red handed in the company of a woman, and Eddie exhibits desire for his niece. Father-son relationship does not remain cordial in *Death of a Salesman* and *All My Sons*. Uncle-niece relationship suffers setback in *A View from the Bridge*. It is true that there is flaw and fault in Miller’s protagonists and they disappoint us in their roles as husbands,
fathers and surrogate father (Eddie Carbone), and they again perform in a very dismal manner in their role in society as salesman, factory-owner, and as a member of community. It is also true that society is equally responsible for the tragic end they meet:

On the one hand, he [Miller] finds them [protagonists] guilty for their failure to maintain their role within the established social structure; though there is something almost rabbinical in the loving sternness of his judgement. On the other hand, while it is certainly true that the system is ultimately affirmed, it cannot be denied that the system is shown to be in some ways responsible for creating those very conditions which provoke the protagonists’ downfall.

(Corrigan, Introduction 4)

In Miller’s plays, neither the individual’s freewill nor society’s determinism is singly responsible for the catastrophe which befalls the protagonist. It is both the individual’s freewill and society’s determinism which bring about the fall of the protagonist. It is, thus, a balanced view of life which encompasses both individual and society. In Miller’s plays, relationship between individual and family, individual and society, individual and economic factors, and individual and state is never smooth and happy. His aim seems to be to strike a balance between individual’s freewill and society’s determinism. Mottram is of the view: “It is the everlasting sought balance between order and the need of our souls for freedom; the relatedness between our vaguest longings, our inner questions, and private lives and the life of the generality of men which is our society and world” (56). It is the “human ability to learn and change” (Mottram 57) on the part of individual and society simultaneously, which may be able to strike a balance between individual’s freewill and society’s determinism.
It may be said that Willy remains indecisive and confused throughout his life. He neither becomes a pioneer and explorer like Ben nor a successful salesman like Dave Singleman:

He is caught between two models . . . the independent explorer in the wilderness as represented by his father and Ben, and the community man tied into both the capitalist enterprise and the family wherein he must be husband, father, and provider. Torn between these two ideals and unable to see or to commit to either fully, he is unsuccessful at both. In its conflicting worlds of the frontier and business, as well as its conflicting concepts of the American Dream, Death of a Salesman contains many of the gender issues that will concern the dramatists to come. (McDonough 30)

However, we should not ignore the implied meaning, suggestion or warning in Miller’s plays. In Death of a Salesman, Miller suggests that one must endeavour to be in tune with the contemporary phase of society one lives in; and it is dangerous to live in the past like Willy Loman who gave the impression of a pre-industrial age individual. In All My Sons, Joe Keller is the victim of his flawed thinking that in order to save his business; he can supply defective machinery and play havoc with the lives of the pilots. In this play, Chris represents the view of society which cannot and would not allow a businessman to indulge in unethical and illegal activities to save his business and earn profit. In A View from the Bridge, Eddie Carbone betrays the norms of his Italian community by getting Marco and Rodolpho arrested. Had he not violated the norms of society, that is, not to betray the member/members of the community, he would not have met the tragic end.
Raymond Williams merits our serious attention when he opines that relationship between individual and society may be seen as a process which affects the individual radically, and general life, too, is reflected through the affected individual:

Tempted always to settle for half – for the loss of meaning and the loss of consequence endemic in the whole complex of personal and social relationships, the American way of living as Miller sees it – the heroes of these plays, because, however, perversely, they are still attached to life, still moved by irresistible desires for a name, a significance, a vital meaning, break out and destroy themselves, leaving their own comment on the half-life they have experienced. Miller’s drama, as he has claimed; is a drama of consciousness, and in reaching out for this new social consciousness – in which ‘every aspect of personal life is radically affected by the quality of the general life, yet the general life is seen at its most important in completely personal terms’ – Miller, for all the marks of difficulty, uncertainty and weakness that stand within the intensity of his effort, seems clearly a central figure in the drama and consciousness of our time. (79)

Arthur Miller, as a playwright, is a social critic who portrays the evil embedded in contemporary industrial society in a convincing manner. In his plays, individual caught in the cross-currents of family, social, economic and political relationships, struggles for a meaning in life. Further, Miller’s realistic portrayal of relationships in society solicits our attention to ponder over the fate of individual in society. Raymond Williams rightly observes:

[Miller] has restored active social criticism to the drama, and has written on such contemporary themes as the social accountability of business, the form of the success-ethic, intolerance and thought-control, the nature of modern work-
relations. Yet he has written ‘about’ these in such a way as to distinguish his work quite clearly from the ordinary sociological problem-play, for at his best he has seen these problems as living tissue, and his most successful characters are not merely ‘aspects of the way of life,’ but individuals who are ends and values in themselves:

He’s a human being, a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid . . . Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person.

It is from this center – a new or newly discovered way of social thinking, which is also powerfully available as direct experience – that any estimate of Arthur Miller as a dramatist must begin. (70)

Miller was of the opinion that theatre must address the audience, it must relate to the common people and to their commonsense. It must be of value to the common masses: “A play ought to make sense to common people. I know what it is to have been rejected by them. Even unfairly so, but the only challenge worth the effort is the wisest one and the tallest one, which is the people themselves” (Driver 59). He is also conscious of alienation and loneliness prevalent in the contemporary society; and he opines that theatre must work for solidarity and humaneness of man:

My concept of the audience is of a public each member of which is carrying about with him what he thinks is an anxiety or a hope, or a preoccupation which is his alone and isolates him from mankind; and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them. If only for this reason I regard the theatre as serious business, one that makes or should make man more human and, which is to say, less alone. (Collected Plays 11)
It is also important to note that in Miller’s plays psychological concerns relate to individual, whereas social concerns relate to society. Miller seems to be prone to both individual and social concerns when he exhibits “preference for plays which seek causation not only in psychology but in society.” (Driver 60)

According to Miller a play communicates directly with audience and its approval or disapproval also depends on the way the audience reacts in the theatre. Thus, one can easily infer that the playwright writes a play for the audience and audience only. Reaction of the audience present in the theatre is of paramount importance for the success or failure of the play: “. . . it [play] must communicate as it proceeds and it literally has no existence if it must wait until the audience goes home to think before it can be appreciated. It is the art of the present tense par excellence” (Miller, Collected Plays 11). Timeliness and topicality is also an important feature of Miller’s plays. It is through contemporary concerns of the audience that he communicates with them in his plays. Miller says:

These plays, in one sense are my response to what was ‘in the air’, they are one man’s way of saying to his fellow men, ‘This is what you see everyday, or think or feel; now I will show you what you really know but have not had the time, or the disinterestedness, or the insight, or the information to understand consciously.’ (Miller, Collected Plays 11)

In his native country America, Arthur Miller saw ups and downs but towards the last decade of his dramatic career and life, he was eulogised and recognised as one of the greatest playwrights of America:

In the 1980s and early 1990s Miller’s plays were given significant revivals or premieres in England, where he seemed more popular than in the U.S. (In 1989 the University of East Anglia opened the Arthur Miller Centre for
American Studies; London revivals of *After the Fall* and *The Crucible* occurred in 1990; *View from the Bridge*, 1995.) . . . *The Archbishop’s Ceiling* was staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1986. . . . In the late 1990s and up to his death Miller’s world underwent something of a Renaissance in the U.S., in part due to superb revivals. A not-for-TV film version of *The Crucible* was finally made in 1996. In 1997-8 he was SIGNATURE THEATRE’S playwright of the season . . . . The year marked the beginning of a series of revivals: *All My Sons* and *A View from the Bridge* (both 1997, ROUNDABOUT); although not the first, revival of *Death of a Salesman* . . . was highly praised in 1999; and *The Price* . . . was revived later that year . . . . Miller’s final play, *Finishing the Picture*, which dealt with the making of his 1961 film, *The Misfits* . . . premiered at the GOODMAN in Chicago in 2004. (Wilmeth 440)

Thus, the revival of Miller’s plays in US, UK, and Europe testifies to the fact that his moral, social, economic and political concerns were of immense value for the welfare of individual and society. Throughout his life, he remained active in exposing the hypocrisy of American dream and moral corruption inherent in socio-economic and political sphere of American society. On Miller’s death (February 10, 2005), the theatre critic Charles Isherwood wrote in the *New York Times*:

> By now, the American dream has been thoroughly dissected, but American values continue to be touted by politicians as the country’s most fruitful export. And so Mr. Miller’s greatest plays, in which he used both his conscience and compassion to question the prerogatives of American society, remain . . . as necessary as ever. . . . [Miller’s] concerns, in the handful of major plays on which his reputation will last, were with the moral corruption
brought on by bending one’s ideals to society’s dictates, buying into the values of a group when they conflict with the voice of personal conscience. (qtd. in Bryer 364)

Present study explores and evaluates the family, social, economic, and political relationships in the selected plays of Arthur Miller in the light of the concept of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54). In the course of dealing with the relationships, sociological, psychological, and Marxist leanings of Miller have been given due importance. Observations and comments of critics have also been taken into consideration. This study is an attempt to show how far the protagonists in the selected plays of Miller are able to tread the path of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54).
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