Chapter II

Family and Social Relationships

For the purpose of family relationships, the present study takes into account Miller’s five major plays – *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *A View from the Bridge* (1955), *After the Fall* (1964), and *The Price* (1968).

Post World War II America faced new challenges. The social questions which became prominent were the growing disintegration in the marital life of Americans and the fear of another world war. The responsibility in marriage was the key issue to be dealt by the dramatists of the time. The revival of the family ethos was the cry of the day. Arthur Miller, the family healer, presented this question in *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), *A View from the Bridge* (1955), *The Crucible* (1953), *After the Fall* (1964), *The Price* (1968) and the plays which followed *The Price* (1968).

Family is the basic unit of the social system which guarantees security and well being of individual. In fact, “it [family] is the key social unit within where we learn to love, come to terms with our aggressions, develop a conscience and acquire values” (Salk 20).

Miller, throughout his life, remained influenced by the Greek tradition of Social Drama. He felt that the relationship between man and society is the primary concern of man as far as human life in general and family life in particular is concerned. Like the Greek dramatists, Miller tried to highlight the importance of “whole man” (“On Social Plays,” 54) which is the ideal model for human civilisation. According to Miller:
The social drama, as I see it, is the main stream and the anti-social drama a bypass. I can no longer take with ultimate seriousness a drama of individual psychology written for its own sake, however full it may be of insight and precise observation. Time is moving; there is a world to make, a civilisation to create that will move toward the only goal the humanistic, democratic mind can ever accept with honor. It is a world in which the human being can live as a naturally political, naturally private, naturally engaged person, a world in which once again a true tragic victory may be scored. (“On Social Plays,” 57)

Miller feels that the Greek drama which now seems religious to the modern mind was more than religious during the earlier times. It expressed a social concern for the people who were united in a community. For the Americans, Miller thinks, religion seems the only way of expressing social feeling. Since the belief in oneness, of unity with larger groups no longer exists, a gap is apparent, between religion and emotions of daily life which was unknown to the Greeks:

Miller is thus right when he directs attention to a general and not class bound “sociality” of men. The question to be answered by the social drama today is: How shall we live? Or more exactly, how shall men live together? Since this was the question which occupied the Attic tragedians as members of their society, Greek drama according to Miller is the real social drama, which we should strive to emulate. (Dutta 24)

Miller’s plays basically highlight the pathetic condition of the contemporary family life of American middle class. Miller was “a preacher who sermonises on the pathetic martyrdom of an oppressed middle class” (Wiegand 132). Due to Miller’s emphasis on family and society, it is generally assumed that he is a social critic and thinker who tries to
unearth the multiple threads of social and familial fabric. Tom Driver observes, “It would be going beyond the evidence to suggest that he adheres to any ‘line’, whether political or ideological. Nevertheless, he bears a quasi-Marxist stamp and most of his plays tend to become partisan social critique” (63). Actually, Miller was concerned with the welfare of individual. He delivers the message that relations between individual, family, society and state should be cordial and harmonious. He explores and investigates the causes which vitiate the cordiality and harmony in human relations.

Major concern of Miller’s plays is industrial and commercial society on the one hand, and family on the other. His endeavour in his plays is to reconcile public and private postures of modern man. In *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Price* one of the characters is shown as committed to family – Joe Keller, Willy Loman and Victor respectively. However, drive for success and material prosperity in a competitive society causes disintegration of family set-up, and family relations suffer severe jolt and shock. From the perusal of the plays, it becomes crystal clear that only genuine love, loyalty, compassion and piety, and moral responsibility in human relations can stop the erosion of cordial family relationships, and damage caused by industrial-commercial pressures of society. Material success is achieved for the welfare of the family. But this material success takes place at the cost of moral responsibility towards society. The magical spell of the capitalist system which nurtures false illusions of success is akin to the cobweb which strangulates the head of the family. Miller does attack the capitalist system but his tone is diplomatic. He attacks the capitalist system in the guise of “liberal parable hidden under social responsibility” (Popkin, “Arthur Miller: The Strange Encounter,” 34). Miller imparts great importance to the concept of family, and rightly so, because family is the basic and primary unit of human society:

The concepts of Father, Mother, and so on were received by us unawares before the time we were conscious of ourselves. In the contrast, the concepts
of Friend, Teacher, Employee, Boss, Colleague, Supervisor, and many other social relations came to us long after we gained consciousness of ourselves. They are thus in an objective rather than a subjective category. ("The Family in Modern Drama," 39-40)

The existence of individual is based on family and society. Family and society provide safety and security to the individual. The individual should treat both family and society as his home. One must be amenable to change in oneself and society. Miller talks of “love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honor which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the idea of family” (Miller, “The Family in Modern Drama,” 36-37).

Man has a subjective as well as objective existence which stretches from individual to family, and family to society. Individual is an integral part of society. Further, society plays dominant and decisive role in the life of the individual:

Society is inside of man and man is inside of society, and you cannot even create a truthfully drawn psychological entity on the stage until you understand his social relations and their power to make him what he is and prevent him from being what he is not. The fish is in the water, and the water is in the fish. (Miller, “The Shadows of the Gods,” 39)

In a largely money-minded social, economic and political structure, the problem is to find the set of values, virtues and vision through which man may be able to lead an ideal life or which we can call whole life. Family bonds are directly affected by societal perceptions and economic phenomenon which have become corrupt with the disintegration of the set of values that used to govern the human society in pre-industrial civilisation. These values were based on the ideal of universal love, compassion, and shared commitment. It is pertinent to
note that as a dramatist Miller “has been perceptive enough to see that a commonly shared set of values is not easily found in the present order. In its place he has chosen to build his tragic conflict on the personal commitment of the hero to a value, or a set of values” (McAnany 16).

On the face of it All My Sons appears to be the exposure of the mentality of profiteering during war, but Miller’s stress is on individual’s responsibility and obligations not only towards family but also towards society. Harold Clurman rightly observes, “What Arthur Miller is dramatising is a universal not a local situation . . . . The difference between Arthur Miller’s individualist and the believer in ‘rugged individuation’ today is that the latter narrows his sense of self so that it extends no further than the family circle, while the former gives himself the scope of humanity” (“The American Playwrights,” 66-67).

Miller’s play All My Sons is based on real incidents in the life of a family during World War II. About the origin of the idea of writing All My Sons, Miller says:

During an idle chat in my living room, a pious lady from the Middle West told of a family in her neighbourhood which had been destroyed when the daughter turned the father in to the authorities on discovering that he had been selling faulty machinery to the Army. The war was then in full blast. By the time she had finished the tale I had transformed the daughter into a son and the climax of the second act was full and clear in my mind. (Collected Plays 17)

Miller portrays conflict of ideas between father and son in All My Sons. Miller pits family concerns against societal concerns. Past and present are at variance with each other in this play. Protagonist Joe’s criminal past haunts his peaceful present.

All My Sons is the story of a Mid-Western manufacturer who manufactures cylinder heads for the fighter planes. In order to save his business from ruin, he never cares for moral
and ethical implications of his decision to supply defective cylinder heads. Thus, Joe Keller, the protagonist in *All My Sons*, represents the highly objectionable, unacceptable and heinous materialistic approach towards society for the sake of amassing wealth for himself and his family. Joe symbolises privatism and individualism in American society. For him personal profit is supreme. He does not care whether his actions cause damage to the interests of society and state. He is concerned with the welfare of his family only. All his actions are guided by taking into consideration the interests of his business and his family. However, family is the primary unit of society. It can’t remain isolated from society. Actually, family and society are complementary to each other, are inter-dependent, and they affect each other. Hence, family relations in *All My Sons* and in other plays have been discussed in the light of their social implications.

Joe is the high priest of materialistic and individualistic approach towards life who plays havoc with the lives of the twenty one pilots of P-40 fighter planes during the Second World War. Further, materialistic approach impels him to deceive his partner, Steve Deever. He tells the investigating authorities that he was unaware of the shipping of the defective fighter airplane parts. It was Steve Deever who did it. Thus, it is a blatant lie on the part of Joe. In order to save his skin, Joe Keller cares little for the need of moral and ethical behaviour in society. Joe’s behaviour smells of diabolical and devilish design on his part. It is denial of responsibility and betrayal of a friend. Joe is exonerated by the court of law for his role in the catastrophe. Thus, Joe pretends to be innocent, but in fact, he is a symbol of denial and betrayal in American society. It is just for the sake of money, wealth and property that Joe says good bye to moral and ethical responsibility in his relations with his partner Steve Deever, society and state by supplying defective airplane parts. On the other hand, George Deever, Chris and Larry represent morally and ethically responsible tendencies in life in the sense that they talk of society and care for society. Larry sacrifices himself for the sake of
nation. George, too, serves the nation during the time of war to fight against Fascism. Chris was also a brave soldier who took part in Second World War and saw quite a large number of his troops perish under his command for the sake of nation. His outlook is quite different from that of his father. Chris is votary of individual’s social responsibility. In this play individual’s responsibility towards society, and individual’s relationship and obligations to society are discussed at length. Finally, it is Chris who tears off the mental mask of villainous innocence worn by Joe. Chris exposes Joe’s pseudo innocence, denial and betrayal. Joe’s image of a gentleman is shattered to pieces. Chris tells his father in a very outspoken and angry manner:

For me! Where do you live, where have you come from? For me! – I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business? What is that, the world – the business? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don’t you have a country? Don’t you live in the world? What the hell are you? You’re not even an animal, no animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth, what must I do? (With his fists he pounds down upon his father’s shoulder. He stumbles away, covering his face as he weeps.) What must I do, Jesus God, what must I do? (Miller, Collected Plays 115-116)

It is Chris who compels his father to acknowledge his guilt, wrongdoing, and challenges his pseudo innocence. He rebuts his father’s justification for his anti-social behaviour of shipping defective and cracked cylinder heads to save his business from collapsing. Ultimately, Chris succeeds in convincing his father that his obligations and responsibilities and relations are not limited to his family only, on the contrary, his obligations and responsibilities extend to society too. Chris is right in his approach because
Joe Keller is part and parcel of his family but at the same time he is also an integral part and parcel of society which has played its role in bringing him prosperity and success and profit in his business. Though it is too late, Joe Keller ultimately realizes that his actions have far reaching consequences of horrible and awesome nature for society. He also realizes that his responsibility and relations do not end with his family; rather his responsibilities extend beyond his family. Realisation of guilt and betrayal dawns upon him; he is so much ashamed of his guilt and betrayal that to escape from this intolerable situation, Joe Keller kills himself by putting a bullet in his head. Thus, we see that the study of relationship between son and father generates conflict between selfish and selfless attitude towards individual and society. Steven R. Centola observes, “The play ends with Chris facing with horror his own complicity in his father’s self destruction, and with Keller’s death the play forcefully repudiates anti-social behavior that derives from the myth of privatism in American society” (57).

In fact, Chris should not be charged of complicity in his father’s self destruction. It is simply the emotional reaction on the part of Chris to assume that he was responsible for his father’s tragic death. On the contrary, it is Joe Keller’s own lack of social and moral responsibility towards society, which causes his death. The play also explodes the myth of privatization in American society. This myth advocates that one should look after one’s private, personal and selfish welfare and in fulfilling the private objectives one need not care for one’s public responsibilities, that is, one’s responsibilities towards society and state. The play All My Sons bears testimony to the fact that enlightened citizens like Chris would not allow the private profit at the cost of public good.

Joe tells his son that he has earned a lot of money during World War II, and now Chris can use this money. Joe’s words are noteworthy: “I’m going to build you a house, stone, with a driveway from the road. I want you to spread out, Chris, I want you to use what I made for you. He is close to him now. I mean, with joy, Chris, without shame . . . with joy”
Thus, Joe unwittingly reveals his guilt. He knows that he has amassed wealth through dubious, shameful and unlawful means. Perhaps, he also knows that in case Chris comes to know of his culpability in the death of innocent fighter pilots, he (Chris) would have nothing to do with his (Joe’s) fortune and wealth. Joe knows in the innermost recesses of his heart that he has earned money not through fair means but it appears that he justifies his actions on the basis of narrow thinking, that is, he is responsible for the welfare of his family only and not of society. That is why, Joe tells Chris: “Because it’s good money, there’s nothing wrong with that money” (Miller, Collected Plays 87).

In Act II, Joe’s crime is exposed. However, he tries to convince Chris through the philosophy of private profit, philosophy of materialism, philosophy of businessmen, and philosophy of self-centred men who bother little about moral implications of their actions – particularly in relation to society. For a businessman, it is the success in business which matters. Joe Keller tries to convince Chris as follows:

KELLER. You’re a boy, what could I do! I’m in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you’re out of business; you got a process, the process don’t work. You’re out of business; you don’t know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell’s it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? (Miller, Collected Plays 115)

Joe is a wily business man. He tries to shift his responsibility of the disaster meted out to the fighter pilots to the technicians of the American Army Air Force when he says, “I never thought they’d install them. I swear to God. I thought they’d stop’em before anybody took off” (Miller, Collected Plays 115). Joe’s mind is governed by material considerations.
He pleads that whatever he had done was for the welfare and prosperity of his family. Capitalistic system of society breeds capitalists. Every individual thinks of becoming a millionaire or a billionaire. It is this individual pursuit of wealth for the sake of individual gain which causes denial of responsibility towards society. Joe denies his guilt, betrays his partner, Steve Deever, gets him imprisoned for no fault of his – simply for the sake of his family. Keller argues, “Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you. I’m sixty-one years old, when would I have another chance to make something for you? Sixty-one years old you don’t get another chance, do ya?” (Miller, Collected Plays 115).

Foregoing discussion amply testifies to the fact that howsoever irresponsible towards his public and social obligations Joe Keller appears to be, happiness and prosperity of family is of paramount importance for him. It appears that he defines morality and ethics in terms of the well-being of his family. However, towards the end of the play Joe feels convinced that he has committed an unpardonable sin and crime in taking the lives of the pilots of P-40 fighter planes, his conscience pricks him to the extent that he ends his life by shooting himself and perhaps only in the said manner could “Joe redeem himself to all his sons” (Griffin 27). It may also be said that Joe committed suicide out of no moral compunction, but out of love for his sons. First, he indulged in anti-social act of supplying wrong machinery to American Air Force to save his business and it was Chris who was to inherit his business, secondly, he committed social crime by putting himself to death out of love for Larry. Joe was deeply in love with Larry. He was shocked to learn what Larry had written in his letter: “If I had him here now I could kill him – ” (Miller, Collected Plays 126). Barry Gross opines, “Joe’s suicide is less a moral judgement than an act of love” (12). It is also important to note that in Death of a Salesman, Willy also commits suicide out of love for his son, Biff. Willy feels that the insurance money will help Biff in establishing himself in business world. Thus,
fathers in All My Sons and Death of a Salesman shower ample love on their sons to the extent that they commit suicide to prove their point.

Chris is made of a different stuff, that is, altruistic stuff. Joe justifies his amassing wealth through wrong and illegal and anti-social means because of his obligations towards his family. Joe says, “I could live on a quarter a day myself, but I got a family so I –” (Miller, Collected Plays 120). To be fair to Joe, we find him in both materialistic and altruistic roles as far as he shows a lot of concern and anxiety for the welfare of his family. He appears to be a highly emotional person who is deeply attached to the progress, prosperity and success of his sons. However, he is altruist in a very limited sense – he thinks of the prosperity of his family only, he does not think of the welfare of a group or groups or society in general; and he is materialist in an unlimited sense – he himself has a strong desire to top the world of business and also wants his sons to be at the top of business world. Joe’s altruism exhibits a narrow vision which encompasses simply his family. Chris’ altruism encompasses society; a broad vision indeed! That is why mother (Kate) says of Chris: “There is something bigger than the family to him” (Miller, Collected Plays 120). Actually, Chris is an altruist and idealist youth who detests dishonesty in business, and in private and public dealings as well. As Chris comes to know of his father’s complicity in the death of 21 fighter pilots, the relations between father and son deteriorate to the extent that Chris calls his father murderer:

CHRIS. Dad . . . Dad, you killed twenty-one men!

KELLER. What killed?

CHRIS. You killed them, you murdered them.

KELLER, as though throwing his whole nature open before Chris. How could I kill anybody?
CHRI$$ \text{S. Dad! Dad!}

KELLER, \textit{trying to hush him}. I didn’t kill anybody!

CHRI$$ \text{S. Then explain it to me. What did you do? Explain it to me or I’ll tear you to pieces. (Miller, \textit{Collected Plays} 114)}

While accusing Joe of lack of moral and ethical standards, and lack of social and moral obligations towards society, and while accusing him of violation of the laws of the land because he supplied defective cylinder heads, Joe’s upbringing and his difficult personal background ought to be kept in mind. As Joe’s wife also does not approve of Joe’s unethical and unsocial action of supplying defective fighter plane parts, he blurts out his sense of insecurity and abandonment when he angrily remarks, “I should’ve put him out when he was ten like I was put out, and make him earn his keep. Then he’d know how a buck is made in the world” (Miller, \textit{Collected Plays} 120). Thus, a pathetic sense of neglect, abandonment, and insecurity is deeply rooted in the psyche of Joe Keller. Barry Gross rightly points out: “There is no zealot like a convert and there is probably no more devoted parent than a neglected or an abandoned child” (17). Keller did not want that his son also should face the difficulties that he himself faced during his childhood and boyhood, but the means he employs for the welfare of his family are neither legally correct nor socially acceptable. Instead of bringing happiness to his family, his action causes tension and conflict in his family. Steven R. Centola remarks, “Keller devotes himself to his family to compensate for his childhood losses. However, instead of ensuring that the problems of the past are not perpetually re-enacted, his actions have the obverse effect and cause a completed breakdown of the family unit” (55). However this anxiety for his sons on Keller’s part does not and cannot absolve him of his criminal, unethical, unsocial and irresponsible behaviour towards the 21 fighter pilots who lost their lives due to his wrongdoing.
It is also pertinent to note that Chris treats his father as an ideal figure and an embodiment of perfection. But, in fact, his father is not an ideal father; on the contrary, he is a shrewd businessman whose foremost priority is to look after his business interests. Ideals of a moral or ethical man or anything else of that nature does not find place in the vocabulary of a clever and successful businessman. Joe’s worldview is very narrow and very limited – it is simply confined to the wellbeing, prosperity of his own family. His concept of social values, concept of right or wrong is limited to the wellbeing of his family. All that contributes to the welfare of his family is right and good for him. Arthur Miller himself remarks in this regard: “Joe Keller’s trouble, in a word, is not that he cannot tell right for wrong but that his cast of mind cannot admit that he, personally, has any viable connection with his world, his universe or his society” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 19).

For Joe “nothing is bigger!” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 120) than the family. Lost in the dream world of his own, Joe tells Kate that Chris will never raise an accusing finger at him:

KELLER. There is nothin’ he could do that I wouldn’t forgive. Because he’s my son. Because I’m his father and he’s my son.

MOTHER. Joe, I tell you –

KELLER. Nothin’s bigger than that. And you’re goin’ to tell him, you understand? I’m his father and he’s my son, and if there’s something bigger than that I’ll put a bullet in my head. (Miller, *Collected Plays* 120)

The “something bigger” was his moral and social responsibility towards society and state. Again and again he justifies his actions in the name of his family. Joe Keller tells Kate: “For you Kate, for both of you, that’s all I ever lived for . . .” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 121). All this shows that whatever he did was socially, morally, and ethically wrong. In this sense,
we can say that he is materialist who treasured wealth at the cost of 21 fighter pilots, but at the same time he is altruist who did all this not for his own sake but for the sake of his family. He lived and died for his family. Thus, he embodies both materialistic and altruistic tendencies in his character. However, it may not be possible to absolve him of his responsibility towards society:

Miller’s plays treat society and especially the relationship of the individual to the community. Ultimately, the central character – constructed in Miller’s work as male – must reckon not only with himself and his family but with his neighbors in his village, region, or nation; he must live by customs, laws, and expectations for which he shares responsibility. Miller defines man in terms of his place among his people, and each protagonist learn that the community shapes him and gives him life. He cannot stand alone, and he cannot retreat into the family; he must live in the world. (Mason 1)

Father-son relationship does not remain confined to the family alone; it steps out to society; highlights responsibility of individual towards society. Larry is so sorry, ashamed, and angry of his father’s action of supplying defective cylinder heads that he decides to do away with his life. In a suicide letter he says which Chris reads, “How could he [Joe Keller] have done that? Everyday three or four men never came back and he sits back there doing business. . . . I don’t know how to tell you what I feel . . . I can’t face anybody . . . I tell you Ann, if I had in there now I could kill him –” (Miller, Collected Plays 126).

Finally, Joe realises that he is responsible to society too. He accepts his moral responsibility in playing with the lives of the pilots. He thinks that the dead pilots also were like his son (Larry) to him. This is the realisation of his responsibility towards society too. It is towards the end of the play that Joe realises his responsibility towards society. It is his son
who makes him realise his social responsibility. Joe comments, “Sure, he [Larry] was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 126). Miller talks about his views on tragedy which are relevant to understand the contemporary scenario of social drama:

> From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his ‘rightful’ place in society. Sometimes he is one who has been displaced from it, sometimes one who seems to attain it for the first time, but the fateful wound from which the inevitable events spiral is the wound of indignity, and its dominant force is indignation. Tragedy, then, is the consequence of man’s total compulsion to evaluate himself. (qtd. in Newton 43)

Chris is also very much aware of individual’s responsibility towards society. He does not want to stop his father who is now morally and mentally prepared to face the consequences of his actions. He (Joe) is perhaps prepared to go to jail when Chris says, “You can be better! Once and for all you can know there’s a universe of people outside and you’re responsible to it, and unless you know that, you threw away your son because that’s why he died” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 126-127).

It is pertinent to note that Joe’s sons are government servants; one is in Army and the other in Army Air Force. Both are aware of their responsibility towards state and society. It is the sons who make their businessman father aware of his responsibility towards society and state. Capitalist Joe cares little for the welfare of the society or state. He thinks that his responsibility ends with his family. Sons (Larry and Chris) represent society and state, and Joe represents capitalism, privatism, and family. It is the pressure of society and state which compels the capitalist Joe to admit his moral flaw, fault and crime. The play also shows that
in capitalist system, corrupt state machinery and corrupt capitalists do irreparable damage to the interests of society and state. It also implies that socially responsible and law abiding capitalists; and corruption-free state machinery can work wonders and perform yeoman’s service for the welfare of society and state. It appears that Miller was inclined towards reforming the capitalist system of economy, and he did not want its total destruction. At the time of writing All My Sons, it appears that despite his Marxist leanings “Miller was less concerned with challenging the structure of American society than with revivifying a moribund liberalism, a capitalism purged only of its more evident rapacity” (Bigsby, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama 171-172). In an interview given to Bigsby, Miller himself admits “that with a sufficient amount of rigorousness these crimes could be resisted.” In the Interview given to Bigsby, Miller says:

The argument that the Marxists had quite rightly, with that play [All My Sons], was that the son who brings down the wrath of moral guard, remains inside the system which has created this immorality. That’s perfectly true. However, I believed then that with a sufficient amount of rigorousness these crimes could be resisted. (qtd. in Bigsby, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama 171)

In All My Sons, we come across the picture of pre-war and war time America which exhibits self assurance and confidence of moral values. Capitalist economy ought to be corruption free, and it should be imbued with concern of man for man. Chris’ attitude also highlights the importance of a sense of human brotherhood and human solidarity in the psyche of the American society. On the contrary, Death of a Salesman reveals an unpleasant and worrisome aspect of capitalist economy of post-war years. In All My Sons, Joe is able to amass wealth; but in Death of a Salesman, Willy cannot realise his dream of a successful
salesman. Towards the end of the play he has been reduced to the status of a beggar, who gets regular financial help from his neighbour, Charley.

In *All My Sons*, the past affects the present. Idealism of Larry affects non-ideal and amoral attitude of Joe. In the play, social responsibility stands in conflict with materialistic attitude towards life:

Arthur Miller studies the relation between society and the individual in terms of three identifiable themes all of which are developed in his [Miller’s] first Ibsenesque success, *All My Sons* (1947): the impact of the past on the present, personal idealism and responsibility. The plot of *All My Sons* emerges from the past which contains Joe Keller’s dishonour. The effect of his moral dereliction on the other characters creates the present action of the play in which the principled Larry’s suicide teaches Joe about the moral superiority of communal responsibility to the materialistic ideal of production-line success.

(Walker 191)

Motif of jail throws ample light on the psychology and attitude of Joe Keller towards his family and society. When Bart tells Joe of “the dirty word” Kate in a very angry mood warns Joe: “There’s no jail here. I want you to stop that jail business! . . . That whole jail business!” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 74). At this Joe feels “shamed and peeved” and tells Kate: “What have I got to hide? What the hell is the matter with you Kate?” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 74). This motif reminds Joe of the past guilt, and at the same time it stands for isolation from society. Steven R. Centola remarks:

The jail reference is repeated throughout the play to bring the past into the present and thereby strengthen the association between Keller’s crime and his guilt. This motif underlines the fact that Keller’s actions have consequences
while also serving to illustrate the problem of setting oneself apart from and above the outer world. As though he were confined in a jail, Keller views the world as having ‘forty foot fro... (that) ended at the building line.’ He denies his relation to society so that he can excuse unethical business practices that keep his manufacturing company fiscally sound and his family financially secure. So long as his acts preserve the welfare of his family, Keller, believes that anything he does can be justified. He convinces himself that his sole responsibility in life is to be successful so that he can support his wife and children. For Keller, ‘Nothin’ is bigger’ than his family. (53)

The twin purpose of Joe is the realisation of the dream of success, which is, generally speaking, the main yearning, aim and objective of every American in life, and secondly, this dream is for private gain, that is, gain for Joe’s family only. Joe’s dream of success bothers least for the welfare of society. Joe’s philosophy of material and financial success is selfish, self-centred and harmful to the well-being of society. Joe’s behaviour shows as if he has no social, moral, and ethical responsibilities and obligations vis-à-vis society. Thus, it is significant to point out that Joe exhibits a strong desire to deceive others, and at the same time has a knack for denying responsibility for his actions. Steven R. Centola makes a significant observation when he comments, “In All My Sons Miller shows how the impulse to betray and to deny responsibility for others, when left ungoverned, can run rampant and wreak havoc on the individual, his family, and his society – even, perhaps civilization as a whole” (59).

However, it is also imperative to point out that “the impulse to betray and to deny responsibility for others” (Centola 59) originates primarily from the materialistic and capitalistic urge in man to grab more and more money, wealth, property and riches through fair or foul means, legal or illegal means. Ironically speaking, in a materialistic and
capitalistic setup of society and state, it is the realization of self interest which matters, and
the law is simply to facilitate the realization of the dream of success, that is, the dream of
achieving private profit. Lust and urge for more and more money never ends. The
materialistic journey ends in total despair and destruction of the protagonist in All My Sons.
And so it does happen in Death of a Salesman. It is a well known fact that materialistic
society enjoins upon individual businessman to fulfil its contractual demands on time, and
delay in fulfilling the said demands may cause irreparable damage to the fortunes of a
businessman. To remain in business, main concern of an individual businessman is to meet
the demand of state and society on time, and therefore, under severe psychological stress and
pressures of business, in a hurry and worry, the businessman generally says good bye to law,
ethics, and morality. As Gascoigne aptly remarks:

In All My Sons, as in all Miller’s plays society and individual are closely
interrelated, not only in the effect of Keller’s crime, which has such violent
repercussions on both levels, but also in its cause. For, though the
responsibility is Keller’s own, the pressures of a materialist society loomed
large behind his decision. His reason for not telling the government that the
cylinder heads were faulty (though, he thought, harmlessly so) was that he
would lose his large contract, and a life time accumulation of business know-
how might be wasted. (176)

In Death of a Salesman, we come across a very sad picture of sons paying no heed to
their old father. It shows that culture of commercial and industrial civilisation, commanded
by capitalist economy, plays havoc with the warmth of human relations in family and society.
Linda’s remarks are revealing when she says, “It sounds so old-fashioned and silly, but I tell
you he put his whole life into you and you’ve turned your backs on him” (Miller, Collected
Plays 165). Linda reminds her sons of the pains their father underwent for the benefit of his
sons. Instead of showing sympathy and understanding, the sons resort to fault finding mission and Biff in particular is a bitter critic of his father. Sons’ attitude reveals the uncaring and unsympathetic behaviour of the sons in a capitalist society, who simply criticise and find fault in the character of their parents and do not pay heed and regard to the other side of the parents. Sons simply embark on fault finding mission in the character of their father. Linda rightly takes her sons to task when she says, “And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that? Is this his reward – to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he loved better than his life, one a philandering bum –” (Miller, Collected Plays 163). Agony of Linda is also revealed in the following conversation between Linda and Biff:

**LINDA.** A small man can be just exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty six years this March, opens up unheard of territories to their trademark and now in old age they take his salary away . . . For he’s been on state commission, like a beginner, an unknown!

**BIFF.** Those ungrateful bastards!

**LINDA.** Are they any worse than his sons? (Miller, Collected Plays 183)

This conversation between son and mother, that is, Biff and Linda, is of highly remarkable importance in the sense that it throws ample light on the role of sons in a family and on the role and attitude of employers in a capitalist society. Sons damn care for their parents! Employers damn care for their employees! Sons care for their own welfare only; employers care for their own profit only. Sons treat their exhausted and tired father as abnormal creature; employers treat Willy worthless salesman because he has grown old and is not able to fetch profit for them like a young salesman! It is also important to note that Willy is an ordinary and unsuccessful salesman. However, he wants that he should be treated
as a successful and extraordinary salesman. He always boasts of his extraordinary personality. It may be said that “Willy’s relationship with his sons is chiefly intended to increase his own reputation and sense of self-worth. He is proud of his sons’ physical prowess and boasts of this to his neighbour Charley, clearly seeing his sons’ physical success as a reflection of his own” (McDonough 29). It is true that Willy is committed to the welfare of his family. He has drawbacks too. Willy fails to achieve success in life. It may be said that Willy’s failures in life are “pre-eminently personal” (Mitchell 394). Willy’s intimate relationship with a woman amounts to disloyalty towards his loyal wife. Willy is caught red handed in the company of a woman by Biff. The following conversation between Willy and Biff throws ample light on Willy’s morally corrupt action:

WILLY. She’s nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely.

BIFF. You – you gave her Mama’s stockings! His tears break through and he rises to go.

WILLY, grabbing for Biff. I gave you an order!

BIFF. Don’t touch me, you – liar!

WILLY. Apologize for that!

BIFF. You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out his suitcase. Willy is left on the floor on his knees.

(Miller, Collected Plays 208)

Actually, loneliness is simply an untenable excuse to justify infidelity on the part of a married man or woman. Further, to treat women as sex objects is to degrade the status and damage the genuine dignity of women as respectable human beings. Willy is not able to maintain the image of an ideal father and ideal husband in modern American commercial
society. However, there are apologists like Gunjan Agarwal who venture to defend Willy Loman:

He [Willy Loman] was devoted to his family; and if a son takes an impersonal and public view of his father’s association with another woman, it shows he lacks faith in filial bonds. If Hamlet, in Shakespeare’s play arraigned his mother Gertrude for playing false to his father, there was moral justification for him to do so. But in this play, Biff had no moral right to accuse his father for being with another woman because in the context of modern commercial milieu, more so in America, women move in and move out in diverse ways.

(33)

M. M. Rutnin also has a sympathetic view of Willy’s indefensible fault when he says, “Yet in his need for love he is denied. Biff’s love and adoration for his father turn into an unforgiving spite for a mere mistake so natural to a lonely salesman. Happy, his second son, deserts him and becomes a corrupted junior executive who chases after women and ruins them for the sake of business competition” (173). It is difficult to agree with Gunjan Agarwal because she absolves Willy Loman of his lustful attitude in the name of modern commercial society. Prevalence of extra-marital relationship in modern commercial and industrial society does not augur well for the time tested moral, social and religious norms which forbid extra-marital relationship. Actually, materialism, capitalism, commercialism, industrialism, and market forces are not governed by any moral, ethical, and religious norms, values and principles. They are governed by their own philosophy of profit and loss in monetary, fiscal, and financial terms. Hence, it does not seem advisable for the sound health and smooth functioning of family relations, filial relations, and social relations, to condone moral, social, and religious lapses on the part of an individual just because he is a salesman, and to overcome his loneliness he can violate norms of moral, familial and social conduct. Biff is
indifferent and unsympathetic towards the mental agony of his father, and to add fuel to the fire, he utters very derogatory and adverse remarks against his father. In Biff’s opinion Willy “has got no character – Charley wouldn’t do this. Not in his own house – spewing out that vomit from his mind” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 162). Linda is really sympathetic and understanding in her dealings with her husband. She is fully devoted to her husband and shares his agony, grief and frustration when she tells Biff, “I don’t say he’s a great man. He’s a human being and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He’s not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 162). She also warns Biff in a very plain but strict manner: “Biff, dear, if you don’t have any feeling for him, then you can’t have any feeling for me” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 162).

Linda’s devotion towards her husband Willy is perhaps the finest expression of love on the part of a wife. Time and again, she warns her sons of dire consequences if they don’t behave properly with their father:

LINDA. No. You can’t just come to see me, because I love him. *With a threat,* but only a threat of tears: He’s the dearest man in the world to me, and I won’t have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You’ve got to make up your mind now, darling, there’s no leeway anymore. Either he’s your father and you pay him that respect, or else you’re not to come here. (Miller, *Collected Plays* 162)

Uncharitable and irresponsible behaviour of Biff and Happy towards their father reveals the dark, dismal and dingy aspect of social consequences of materialism practised as capitalistic mode of economy. Disintegration and alienation reign supreme in family relations. And social consequences of capitalism are so horrible that we find commercial
world to which Willy Loman belongs quite neglectful of his plight during his old age – no salary, no pension, simply commission.

It was the success of an elderly salesman, David Singleman, which deeply impressed Willy Loman and he decided to become a salesman. Dave Singleman’s career represented “the co-operative and benevolent nature of capitalism” (Carson 51). It is the tragedy of an old salesman who has grown tired and is in need of love and compassion which he does not receive from his sons, though his wife Linda shows immense compassion and love for him. Due to his old age, Willy is not able to perform his duties well. Willy says, “I am tired to death. The flute has faded away. He sits on the bed beside her, a little numb. I couldn’t make it. I just couldn’t make it, Linda” (Miller, Collected Plays 131). Linda is of understanding nature, and so advises her sons to be caring for Willy. Linda remarks, “Be loving to him. Because he’s only a little boat looking for a harbor. She is trembling with sorrow and joy. Oh, that’s wonderful, Biff, you’ll save his life” (Miller, Collected Plays 176).

Willy is not satisfied with the status of an average salesman, average father, and average member of society. He wants to leave his footprints on the sands of time. He wants to become an ideal father, ideal salesman and ideal member of society. His identity and name are very dear to him. M. M. Rtnin observes:

Like all Miller’s heroes, Willy sacrifices everything – even his life – for the right to be recognised as an individual on this earth. The Proctor in The Crucible rather accepts death in place of a life without a name. ‘How may I live without my name?’ Eddie Carbone, the hero in A View from the Bridge, in his fanatic death cry, repeatedly asserts his self identity: ‘Yeah, Marco! Eddie Carbone. Eddie Carbone. Eddie Carbone . . . wipin’ the neighbourhood with my name like a dirty rag! I want my name, Marco.’ (174)
In brief, *Death of a Salesman* depicts the last twenty four hours of the life of the protagonist, Willy Loman. He goes back in his immediate past as well as remote past. Stream of consciousness technique employed in this play brings into focus family and social relationships:

The form of *Death of a Salesman* was an attempt as much as anything else to convey the bending of time. There are two or three sorts of time in that play. One is social time; one is psychic time, the way we remember things; and the third one is the sense of time created by the play, and shared by the audience. . . . it is dealing with material that goes back probably twenty-five years . . . *Salesman* is absurdly simple! It’s about a salesman and it’s his last day on the earth. . . . It’s all relationships. (Miller, “An Interview with Arthur Miller,” 376-377)

Family relationship in *A View from the Bridge* relates to possessive nature of the protagonist, Eddie Carbone. He is too emotional and sentimental about his obsession with his wife’s young niece, Catherine, to allow anybody even to look at her. He does not want that Catherine should do a job. He says, “I don’t like the looks they’re giving you in the candy store” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 381). He also does not want that Catherine should love and marry Rodolpho. Even the narrator Alfieri tells him in very plain words, “Eddie, I want you to listen to me. . . . A man works hard, he brings up a child, sometimes it’s a niece, sometimes even a daughter, and he never realises it, but through the years – there is too much love for the daughter, there’s too much love for the niece. Do you understand what I’m saying to you?” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 409). Alfieri further tells him: “She [Catherine] wants to get married, Eddie. She can’t marry you, can she?” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 410). Eddie reacts in a very furious manner: “What’re you talkin’ about, marry me! I don’t know what the hell you’re talkin’ about!” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 410).
The above reaction suggests that he has no incestuous inclination towards his wife’s niece Catherine; on the contrary it is his too much anxiety and concern for his niece which may be treated as incestuous. It is also important to note that Eddie’s wife Beatrice also does not approve of Eddie’s too much concern for Catherine. Beatrice tells Catherine: “It’s wonderful for a whole family to love each other. But you’re a grown woman and you’re in the same house with a grown man” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 405). A little earlier she also warns her: “You still think you’re a little girl, honey . . . Well you can’t do it. Or like you sit on the edge of the bath tub talkin’ to him when he’s shavin’ in his underwear” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 405). Beatrice also asks her husband: “When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 399).

Whether or not Eddie’s attitude is incestuous towards Catherine, too much concern and anxiety and possessiveness for Catherine on the part of Eddie lead to crisis and conflict in family relations, and the conflict extends to societal relations. He does not want that a petty fellow like Rodolpho should marry Catherine. Out of jealousy towards Rodolpho, Eddie violates the social code of his community of solidarity with the fellow members of the Italian community. He gets Rodolpho and Marco arrested by the police. In this way, he betrays his community members. He does all this violation of the ethics of his community quite knowingly and deliberately. Earlier in the play, he warns Catherine not to tell anybody in the neighbourhood about the arrival of Marco and Rodolpho, because he knew that any informer could bring to the notice of the police about Marco and Rodolpho’s illegal immigration in the United States. He recounts the story of Vinny who had informed the immigration authorities about the illegal immigration of his uncle. As a result of this betrayal, Vinny was severely punished for the violation of societal conduct. Beatrice recalls, “Oh, it was terrible. He had five brothers and the old father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs – three flights his head was bouncin’ like a coconut. And they spit on him in the
street, his own father and his brothers. The whole neighbourhood was cryin’” (Miller, Collected Plays 389). Catherine asks, “So what happened to him?” and Eddie tells her, “Him? You’ll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How’s he gonna show his face?” (Miller, Collected Plays 389). All this shows that Eddie is quite aware of the dire consequences of betrayal. In All My Sons, Joe Keller violates the law of the land, in A View from the Bridge, Eddie also violates the law, but it is the law of community to which he belongs. Catherine was very sympathetic with him, but when she finds Eddie violating the ethical code of community she becomes violent and derides him in a very harsh language. In her opinion now Eddie, “belongs to the sewer,” he is “a rat,” he, “bites people when they sleep” (Miller, Collected Plays 436). We are reminded of Chris in All My Sons who was quite sympathetic to his father, but on the knowledge of his father’s guilt and betrayal, admonishes him in a very violent manner.

It is due to betrayal that Eddie has to undergo the wrath of his community. Nobody shows any sympathy for him. Eddie calls Lipari, Louis and Mike, but they do not bother about him because he has violated the norms of his community. Marco, in the presence of neighbours, spits into Eddie’s face. Eddie’s image in society and his self esteem suffer shock. It is for the sake of his name in society that he threatens to kill Marco who has hurt him to the core of his heart. Like Proctor in The Crucible, Eddie also cannot live with the soiled name. He tells Marco: “. . . Wipin’ the neighbourhood with my name like a dirty rag! I want my name, Marco. He is moving now, carefully, towards Marco. Now gimme my name and we go together to the wedding” (Miller, Collected Plays 438). But Marco is not in a mood of reconciliation. So it is in order to regain his social image in society that the fights duel with Marco, and is killed. It is also significant to note that ultimately he is prepared to attend the wedding ceremony of Catherine and Rodolpho, but he cannot forgive Marco who has publicly insulted him and hurt his self esteem. Thus, his getting ready to attend the wedding
of Catherine and Rodolfo, and his last words “My B.!” (Miller, Collected Plays 439), and his dying in the arms of Beatrice testify to the fact that he was not a man of incestuous nature. There is a large body of critics who refer to Miller’s interest in incest and homosexuality in A View from the Bridge. Christopher Bigsby remarks:

Certainly he [Eddie] denounces passion primarily because it is an image of the anarchy which he fears in his own being, but that passion is in his case literally misdirected. It is not simple adultery to which he is tempted, but a symbolic incest, since he acts as Catherine’s father. He is anarchy incarnate. All his actions spill out of a central madness. And it is that madness which to some degree nullifies his force as a tragic hero and threatens his significance as a social commentary. The play becomes less an analysis of the informer than a study of the mad man, obsessive, self-destructive and destructive of others. (A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama 202)

To treat this play as incest and homosexuality tragedy is to overlook and sidetrack the dominant theme of individual’s responsibility towards one’s community. John Gassner’s view appears to be pertinent and convincing when he remarks that “incest tragedy is actually less important in A View from the Bridge than the tragedy of an informer who betrays a relative to immigration officer out of jealousy” (21-22). Gerald Weales also recognises the theme of individual’s responsibility towards society when he says, “Miller’s concern with the theme of betrayal placed A View from the Bridge far outside the area of opportunistic sensationalism” (135). Eddie as a law-abiding citizen helps the state in informing the immigration authorities about the illegal arrival of his wife’s relatives in America. However, Eddie’s loyalty to the law of the state brings him into direct conflict with the rules and customs of his Italian community. Eddie is loyal to the state, though this loyalty to state costs him his life.
Miller did not indulge in psycho-sexual romanticism, and therefore he tried to do justice to the misunderstood victim in *A View from the Bridge*. To limit the thematic analysis and evaluation simply to incestuous passion is to ignore the deeper meaning contained in the play *A View from the Bridge* – an individual may or may not like but he is bound to follow the societal norms, failing which individual is bound to suffer like Eddie. Miller himself did not appreciate psycho-sexual romanticism prevalent in the contemporary theatre. He felt that the theatre was “reiterating into an area of psycho-sexual romanticism and this at the very moment when great events both at home and abroad cried out for recognition and analytic inspection . . . I was tired of mere sympathy in the theatre. The spectacle of still another misunderstood victim left me impatient. The tender emotions I felt were being overworked. I wanted to write in a way that would call up the faculties of knowing as well as feeling” (qtd. in Hogan 34).

As regards moral concerns of individual’s responsibility towards society, Harold Clurman rightly observes that Miller lays more emphasis on responsibility towards community or society than on sexual motivation in *A View from the Bridge*:

In a sense this play [*A View from the Bridge*] is an adjunct to *The Crucible*. While the blemish on Proctor’s purity is a contributing factor to his Calvary, the personal motivation in *A View from the Bridge* obscures this theme almost as much as it reveals it. For this play dramatises the passion of betrayal. A decent man is led to squealing on his kin because of jealousy.

Eddie Carbone does not recognise his motivation; this would mortify him. He must rationalise his act on moral grounds. So much is made of Carbone’s adulterous and semi-incestuous drive towards his niece that we are apt to miss the fact that what is at stake is not the psychology of sexual turmoil but of
duplicity, the man’s inability to live up to the obligation of comradeship. We must not force others to pay for the agony of our own weakness. (‘Arthur Miller’s Later Plays,’ 149)

Thus, in Miller’s plays we notice that betrayal born of jealousy in A View from the Bridge plays vital role in the tragic end of Eddie’s life. However, it appears that till the last moment of his life Eddie remains oblivious of the betrayal of the norms of his community.

Miller’s play After the Fall was staged in New York City on January 23, 1964. It was directed by his friend Elia Kazan. In After the Fall, Miller tells that it is society which is responsible for the deterioration and distortion of man’s soul. Action of the play takes place in the mind of Quentin, the protagonist of the play. In his opening speech he dwells on his relations with others. He has fallen in love with Holga, and is at the same time reminded of his failed marriages with Louise and Maggie. He is reminded of his deep commitment to truthfulness in his dealings with others, and at the same time of the hollowness of his own self. He is also reminded of insincerity and hollowness in family and social relations. He was not able to maintain satisfactory relationship with his mother and his two former wives. In his memory, he finds his mother rebuking his father for financial setbacks. Holga tries to convince him that he himself is responsible for his actions. He recollects his sexual attraction for the wife of one of his best friends. He also recollects his responsibility to his wife, home, and law. He thinks of relationship between his parents: “Why do I think things falling apart? Were they ever whole?” (Miller, After the Fall 26). Next, he thinks of his former wife, Louise. There is lack of cordial and congenial relationship between the couple, and Louise is of the opinion that Quentin is both cold and unfaithful to her. Louise wants that Quentin should treat her as “a separate person” (Miller, After the Fall 149) but Quentin does not oblige her. Louise in anger calls him idiot. The image of Maggie’s physical charm appears in his mind. Maggie’s innocence and gullibility attracts him towards her. The break-up in the
marriage of Quentin and Louise starts with the news of Lou’s suicide and it takes three years to end this relationship which was already dry and unproductive.

In Act II, stream of consciousness technique highlights the presence of his former wives and his present friend, Holga. He thinks that he has not been able to maintain positive, satisfactory and successful relationship with women in his life. Brief appearance of his mother reminds him of the guilt of unfulfilled family responsibilities. In the realm of memory, he comes across the scene of betrayal by his mother when the family went on a vacation leaving him alone at home. Perhaps the betrayal by her mother affected him deeply and he finds it difficult to mourn her death the way he should. He feels himself neither guilty, nor innocent in relation to Maggie. His relationship with Maggie was guided by the feeling of responsibility in love and sexual gratification. Maggie becomes a drunkard and drug addict. Twice she tries to commit suicide. Quentin advises her to be responsible and serious about her life and keep away from drinking and drug addiction. His advice falls on deaf ears. She gets more and more indulged in drinking and pill-addiction. In these circumstances, Quentin starts feeling that he should think about his own survival.

Maggie accuses Quentin of being unloving and cold. Finally, she commits suicide. His former wife Louise also charged him with the same accusation. He accuses himself of using others for his own selfish ends. But at the same time, he also reaffirms that he loved Maggie. Holga tries to convince him that nobody in this world is totally, completely and absolutely innocent. He declares the world is evil, people are evil, and he himself is evil. Finally, he declares that after the biblical fall, evil is the fact of life. Evil is very much there in the world. The only ray of hope is that we must have courage to resist inherent evil and show courage to live, despite the presence of evil in this world. Miller seems to suggest that before the biblical fall there was total and complete innocence in man, but after the biblical fall evil has polluted the stream of innocence, stream of life of man, and for the sake of survival, Man
must muster courage to resist the evil. Man must muster courage to survive in this world, despite evil in it. It is important to note that before the curtain falls he climbs up towards Holga who signifies the presence of some degree of innocence in man, though not complete and total innocence.

*After the Fall* is the allegory of “the essential journey of Everyman through the modern world” (Murray 128). The play depicts that “man must face life with self-knowledge and self-forgiveness” (Murray 151). The play also exhibits that we must have the courage to face defeat. It is “only after facing the knowledge of our own defeat can we hope to progress; only after admitting our own evil can we work for our own good” (Trowbridge 226). Quentin has been unfair to his wives and his friend, Lou. It is the awareness of evil which leads Quentin “to acceptance of his responsibility for what has happened to them” (Corrigan 11). His role towards his wives and Lou bears testimony to the fact that like Willy Loman and Joe Keller, Quentin also, is the victim of guilt and betrayal syndrome.

Quentin pays more attention to his job as a lawyer. His pursuit of success leads to his negligence of marital relationship. Thus, between love and success, it appears that he chooses success at the cost of love. Actually, he wants to “fly around in a constant bath of praise” (Miller, *After the Fall* 57). Quentin is hungry for praise. Louise tells him, “Quentin, I am not a praise machine!” (Miller, *After the Fall* 57). And in a very contemptuous tone she also remarks, “What an idiot!” (Miller, *After the Fall* 59). Before coming into relationship with Maggie, Quentin has seen the loss of love in the case of his own parents, and in the case of his relationship with Louise. He asks Maggie: “You’re all love, Aren’t you? MAGGIE. That’s all I am” (Miller, *Collected Plays* 72). Initially, both Quentin and Maggie need each other’s dependence, but with the passage of time Quentin gets disillusioned. He fails to maintain cordial and warm relationship with Maggie. Leonard Moss rightly remarks, “… love, at first freely proposed, was then selfishly withdrawn… fidelity, hopefully sought, was
soon bitterly lost” (60). His relations with his two wives were cold. Maggie committed suicide and Louise became a psychological case:

    LOUISE. We don’t seem . . . married.

    QUENTIN. We? (Miller, Collected Plays 36-37)

In the married life, the relationship loses its natural warmth when one of the spouses tries to be over possessive and dominant. In After the Fall, Quentin’s mother, Quentin’s two wives – Louise and Maggie, and Lou’s wife, Elsie, are of dominating nature. According to Mickey it was Lou’s wife who pressurised Lou to face the HUAC trial which resulted in his suicide.

The Price is the play which centres round the familial conflict which results in the disintegration of familial values. It shows that the father’s money-minded attitude brings disaster in the family which is the main cause of discord between the two sons, Victor and Walter. The play depicts the Depression only as a vehicle to unravel the father’s materialistic attitude. The father in this play hovers like a ghost in the memories of his two sons. As the play opens, we find two brothers – Victor and Walter – meeting after a gap of sixteen years to settle the family affairs and to dispose of their parental furniture. Their meeting takes the shape of a dispute and the meeting which was to decide the price of the parental furniture, includes the issues of several other prices – the price for filial loyalty, successful career, happy marriage, and breaking family ties.

In the materialistic society the feelings and emotions of love, loyalty, and sacrifice have lost their fragrance. Even the smallest unit of society, that is, family is also corrupted by money which makes man treacherous, self-centred, and disloyal to those who have done a lot for his well being. The Price is the continuation of All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, but
in this play we find a change in Miller’s attitude towards family relationships. In this play we find the progress in Miller’s views in the sense that for the discord in familial ties only society is not to blame, rather human nature and human imperfections also play a significant role.

The Price tries to dramatise the theme that man is responsible for his actions and their outcome. Man should take the responsibility for his decisions rather than merely cursing the society. The arguments between the brothers point out their differences on the issues like responsibility, love, and loyalty within the family relationship: “Responsibility is a kind of love. It’s the only thing that prevents total slaughter, violence and nihilism” (Moss 158). In the play, Victor is the only character who has a sense of responsibility for his family. When his family is in the grip of Economic Depression, he comes forward to help it. He sacrifices his studies and joins the police force to support his family financially. However, it is the fact that later in life he feels that his sacrifice has gone waste. This desperation finds outlet when he talks to his wife Esther, and says, “I’ll be frank with you, kid – I look at my life and the whole thing is incomprehensible to me. I know all the reasons and all the reasons and all the reasons, and it ends up – nothing” (Miller, The Price 24-25). Walter, on the other hand, does not take any responsibility and has a materialistic bent of mind. He is self-centred and refuses to sacrifice his aim in life for the sake of his family which is facing tough time because of Depression. Walter establishes himself as a well known surgeon and earns millions of dollars. The ghost of failure makes him ill and as he recovers from his illness, he finds that in the pursuit of materialistic success he estranged himself from the familial bonds. He finds himself alone and isolated. He realises that without the cordial family ties, life is barren and dry like the wasteland. Thus, the blind race for material gain ends in the disharmony of family relationships – father-mother, father-son, brother-brother, and husband-wife.
In the discussion about their past life, Walter reveals that their father had 4000 dollars with him at the time of the Economic Depression. Thus, he tries to shatter the illusion of Victor’s sacrifice for the sake of family. Walter tries to dismantle the illusion and pressurise Victor to face the reality that there was no feeling of love in the family, and Victor’s feeling of sacrifice was merely his illusion to run away from reality. As far as family relations between Victor’s father and mother are concerned, there was a lack of warmth of love and loyalty. Walter says, “there was no love in this house. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement” (Miller, The Price 90). Walter further tells, “They were never lovers – she [mother] said a hundred times that her marriage destroyed her musical career” (Miller, The Price 90). Victor, in his arguments with Walter, tries to overshadow Walter’s success by pointing out:

You came for the old handshake, didn’t you! The okay! [Walter halts in doorway:] And you end up with the respect, the career, the money, and the best of all, the thing that nobody else can tell you so you can believe it – that you’re one hell of a guy and never harmed anybody in your life! Well, you won’t get it, not till I mine! (Miller, The Price 92)

Price has been paid by Victor and Walter for their deeds. Victor has paid the price for his sense of loyalty and duty towards his father; while Walter has paid the price for his materialistic attitude. He is lonely and isolated from familial ties. He is also under mental depression due to his broken marriage. He has lost his peace of mind. In this play, two main approaches to life have been discussed in detail – moral and material. It is true that Walter has achieved success in the materialistic sense, but he lacks Victor’s moral responsibility towards family. Too much stress on personal gains makes Walter selfish and self-centred. He does not bother about the welfare of his parents and brother. The basic question is “to find an interpretation of existence which depends neither on a naive endorsement of human
perfectibility or a cynical pose of alienation. The real problem lies in acknowledging the imperfection of man and the inadequacy of society and yet continuing to place faith in the human potential” (Bigsby, “What Price Arthur Miller? An Analysis of The Price” 22).

Family relations are based on material considerations. Victor’s father betrays him by concealing the information that he had 4000 dollars with him. But Victor is a loyal son who tries to defend his father when he says, “I just didn’t want him to end up on the grass. And he didn’t. That’s all it was, and I don’t need anything more” (Miller, The Price 92). In the play, the attitude of the wives is also materialistic. Victor and Walter’s mother and Victor’s wife are the case in point. As Walter says, “There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement. . . . she [mother] said a hundred times that her marriage destroyed her musical career. They [parents] were never lovers” (Miller, The Price 90).

The emphasis in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, and The Price is on father-son relationship. In All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, the fathers are caring for their sons. Whatever false illusions they may have, they try to work for the betterment of their sons’ future. In Death of a Salesman, Willy Loman sacrifices while thinking that after his death his insurance money will be enough for Biff to start a new business. Similarly, Joe Keller in All My Sons thinks that he supplied defective cylinder heads to the American Army Air Force because he wanted to save his business from ruin and earn more and more money for the betterment of his family. But The Price is totally a different play. In this play, father-son relationship has been discussed in a new perspective. The play shows that in father-son relationship, father’s role is not always laudable. Franz betrays his son Victor by concealing the information of money that was with him during the Depression. Franz’s money minded attitude plays havoc with the career of his son, Victor. He could not pursue his university education. In All My Sons and Death of a Salesman, Chris and Biff respectively realise the folly of their fathers’ illusions. They have ample time to come out of the illusions which their
fathers had nurtured for them. They decide to chart the course of their life in their own way. But in *The Price*, Victor is left with no option. He is on the verge of his retirement. The revelation from Walter’s mouth that there was no need of Victor’s sacrifice for the sake of family because their father had enough money to run the family at the time of Depression, has no value for Victor as he has spent the best part of his life in the job of a policeman.

In *The Price*, Miller’s earlier conception that family is a sustaining force for society seems to be shattered as all the members of the family except Victor are motivated by materialistic ends. There is no feeling of genuine love for the family. Even parents are themselves indulged in betrayal. As far as family relations between Victor’s mother and father are concerned, they lacked warmth of love and loyalty. As Walter tells Victor: “. . . there was no love in this house. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement. . . . she [mother] said a hundred times that her marriage destroyed her musical career. They [parents] were never lovers” (Miller, *The Price* 90). On the contrary, in *Death of a Salesman*, Linda is totally devoted to her husband Willy, but in *The Price* we find an altogether different story lacking the feeling of love and devotion on the part of wife in the family. Further, in the *Death of a Salesman*:

Willy Loman has broken a law without whose protection life is insupportable if not incomprehensible to him and to many others; it is the law which says that a failure in society and business has no right to live. Unlike the law against incest, the law of success is not administered by statute or church but it is very nearly as powerful in its grip upon men. (Miller, *Collected Plays*, 35)

Arthur Miller tries to counter the horrible nature and consequences of law of success by juxtaposing “the system of love which is the opposite of the law of success. It is embodied in Biff Loman, but by the time, Willy can perceive his love, it can serve only as an ironic
comment upon the life he sacrificed for power and for success and its tokens” (Miller, *Collected Plays*, 36). We find the same mad race of success in the figure of Walter. For the sake of his career and success he cares little for love and loyalty and devotion in family relations. We also come across very strong desire for success in Joe Keller in *All My Sons*, which is at the cost of love, peace and harmony in family relations.

From the point of view of husband-wife relationship, Linda is totally submissive, loyal, and devoted to her husband, Willy in *Death of a Salesman*. Bigsby makes a very significant observation about Linda’s attitude towards Willy:

> She has reduced her life to a single focus – Willy. . . . Though she is never swept up in Willy’s dream she refuses to judge them. Her almost complete failure to understand Willy as opposed to sympathise with and admire him, is thus finally a sign of the inadequacy of that love. It is not strong enough to make demands, to wrestle Willy away from his illusions. *(A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama* 182)

It appears that Linda treats Willy as infallible person; she never doubts Willy’s sincerity and integrity for passion of success in life. It is also pertinent to note that Willy’s concern for the welfare of his family perhaps leaves no room for Linda to question his dream of success. Moreover, dreaming is part and parcel of human nature. It was not something unsocial or immoral which she would have questioned. Kate Keller in *All My Sons* is sympathetic towards her husband’s mental agony, but does not appear to be supportive of her husband’s illegal and evil action of supplying defective cylinder heads to the American Army Air Force. Following conversation between Joe and Kate throws ample light on their different perceptions:
MOTHER. I think if you sit him down and you – explain yourself. I mean you ought to make it clear to him that you know you did a terrible thing. Not looking into his eyes: I mean if he saw that you realize what you did. You see?

KELLER. What ice does that cut?

MOTHER, a little fearfully. I mean if you told him that you want to pay for what you did.

KELLER, sensing . . . quietly. How can I pay?

MOTHER. Tell him – you’re willing to go to prison. Pause.

KELLER, struck, amazed. I’m willing to –?

MOTHER. quickly. You wouldn’t go, he wouldn’t ask you to go. But if you told him you wanted to, if he could feel that you wanted to pay, maybe he would forgive you.

KELLER. He would forgive me! For what?

MOTHER. Joe, you know what I mean.

KELLER. I don’t know what you mean! You wanted money, so I made money. Want must I be forgiven? You wanted money didn’t you?

MOTHER. I didn’t want it that way. (Miller, Collected Plays 119-120)

As regards the relationship between brothers in The Price, Victor recognises and epitomises the value of filial and human relationships, value of love and loyalty, but Walter is a foil to Victor who represents the value of money and dream of success at the cost of duties and responsibilities towards the welfare of the family. Victor is the icon of moral and ideal
responsibility towards family, whereas Walter shirks the same, and stands for money and prosperity and material gains for one’s own success and benefit only. Victor stands for idealistic attitude towards family but Walter represents pragmatic attitude which stands for self-centred and selfish and individualistic approach caring little for love and loyalty towards family. Victor embodies moral responsibility towards family and society which may be treated as the main trait of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54). Victor is quite aware of the fact that as a police officer he has performed his job towards society in a responsible and honest manner when he says, “...I’ve done a job that has to be done and I think I’ve done it straight” (Miller, The Price 81). Walter also recognises Victor’s altruistic, moral attitude for the benefit of society when he says, “...you simply tried to make yourself useful” (Miller, The Price 71).

In All My Sons Miller exposes the self-centred and selfish nature of individual who cares little for moral considerations in his attitude towards others. Due to his greed of money for the welfare of his family, Joe serves death to the pilots by shipping defective parts of fighter planes. But this action his proves self-destructive. It is, perhaps, evil inherent in man’s nature which dominates Joe’s actions and makes him blind to the moral implications of his deeds. But we cannot ignore the role of commercial and business world; and the role of society too. Ethical environment which guided the business world at the time of writing of this play was as follows in the words of Joe: “Who worked for nothin’ in that war? When they work for nothin’, I’ll work for nothin’. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It’s dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it’s nickels and dimes, what’s clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go!” (Miller, Collected Plays 125).

Thus, evil in individual at micro level, and evil in society at macro level are related to each other, and it is evil at the level of individual which is punished by the moral and ethical
code of society. It is an intriguing societal fact that moral and ethical code evolved by society does not punish evil in society, that is, it (society) does not punish business world, for moral and ethical corruption they resort to in their business dealings. As we see in All My Sons, corruption in business world is a very serious and terrifying phenomenon. Thus, we may safely assume that in All My Sons both individual and society are guided by evil. One may say that relations between individual and society are based on moral and ethical corruption. For example, in All My Sons, Joe is a corrupt businessman-he is a part and parcel of corrupt business world. In Willy’s case, we may also say, individual proposes but society disposes. But in Willy’s case, it is neither crime nor sin to dream. Charley in the Death of a Salesman makes a very significant observation when he says, “Nobody dart blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy” (Miller, Collected Plays 222). Willy’s dream of success meets a tragic end. As he grows old, his employer, Howard, fires him from the job. For Howard, Willy is of no use as he has grown old; and an old salesman is not as beneficial for business in comparison to a young salesman. Thus, it is the profit and money which matter in business world; human beings and human emotions do not carry weight in the eyes of businessmen. The businessmen interpret the moral code of society in terms of the profit they earn.

After the fall and The Price seem to be tied by a similar thread which is the extension of Miller’s approach towards fraternal relationship. In both these plays family undergoes the same trauma due to the economic depression of 1929. In both these plays we have brothers – one who is loyal to family and the other who is prone to self interest. Dan (After the Fall) and Victor (The Price) sacrifice their personal interests in favour of family by leaving the college studies to help the family during Depression. Quentin (After the Fall) and Walter (The Price) represent the category of selfish and self-centred sons who leave their home in search of better opportunities without caring for the interest of the family. Here the moral responsibility is abandoned in favour of selfish ends. In both plays economic disaster tells upon the
financial and spiritual health of the head of family, that is, father; and the mother in both plays instead of showing sympathy towards the husband, criticises her husband’s failure in business. In The Price, wife’s reaction to husband’s failure in business in Victor’s words is of a very unpleasant nature:

VICTOR. . . . It was right on this couch. She was all dressed up –for some affair, I think. Her hair was piled up, and long earrings? And he had his tuxedo on . . . and made us all sit down; and he told us it was all gone. And she vomited. [Slight pause. His horror and pity twist in his voice.] All over his arms. His hands. Just kept on vomiting, like thirty-five years coming up. And he sat there. Stinking like a sewer. And a look came onto his face. I’d never seen a man look like that. He was sitting there, letting it dry on his hands.

(Miller, The Price 89)

While comparing Victor and Walter, it may be said that from material point of view Victor is loser and Walter is victor. But as far as moral obligation toward father and family is concerned, Victor is definitely victor and Walter is definitely loser.

In brief, we come across the theme of guilt and betrayal in the Death of a Salesman, All My Sons, A View from the Bridge, The Price and After the Fall. Drive for success in All My Sons and After the Fall is the major thematic concern; and illusion of success and failure in achieving the success is the major thematic concern in Death of Salesman. These thematic concerns affect the relations among the members of family; and we can safely conclude that family and societal concerns are intertwined to the extent that they cannot be treated as isolated from each other. Family relations affect the societal relations, and vice versa. Welland rightly remarks that “the frictions of family life” are related “to those of the macrocosm outside: his [Miller’s] families live in a recognisably real world” (2-3). Miller has
used the analogy of interrelationship between fish and water to describe interrelationship between individual and society. This analogy means “a serious treatment of a human being must encompass the society that surrounds him or her as the force that has conditioned thoughts, culture, attitudes and values” (Griffin 5-6).

Relationship between individual and society is the same as we notice between fish and water. Fish cannot exist and survive without water; similarly individual cannot exist and survive without society. Further, fish is surrounded by water and individual is surrounded by socio-economic and political phenomenon of society. Modern tragedy emanates from the conflicts and clash of values between individuals and their socio-economic environment. Man’s environment is either threatening the survival of the individual or promising him security. Social surroundings, when threatening, generate conflict in family relationships as we notice in All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, A View from the Bridge, After the Fall, and The Price. Family is the smallest basic unit of society which reflects larger concerns of society: “...the larger society is reflected by the little society of the family. That little society, that microcosm, Miller knew intimately and revealingly documented” (Hogan 15).

As far as the concept of “whole man” (Miller, “On Social Plays,” 54) is concerned, the protagonist has to be judged both in relation to family and society. In Death of a Salesman, Willy Loman is no doubt devoted to his family, but fails to achieve the goal of success in society. In All My Sons, Joe Keller is concerned with the welfare of his family, but violates the law of the land by supplying defective cylinder heads. In A View from the Bridge, Eddie is deeply concerned with the welfare of his niece but violates the norms of his community by getting Rodolpho and Marco arrested. However, in getting his wife’s relatives arrested, Eddie proves himself a law abiding citizen of US. He is loyal to the state but traitor to his community. In The Price, Victor comes to his father’s help by getting a job in police department. He does so at the cost of his career. He served the police department and in this
way served the state and society in an honest manner. However, he also knows the value and importance of money. He tells Solomon: “. . . there’s no respect for anything but money” (Miller, The Price 44). He finds himself failure in terms of money. However, it is significant to note that he is loyal and sincere towards the welfare of the family, and at the same time he performs the duties as an honest officer, and thus, proves himself loyal and sincere to society too.
Works Cited


