Chapter I

Introduction

Much of the theatrical revolution that interwove theatrical text with social context owed its beginning to Shepard who had a voracious and fresh voice. His voice was among the first to inform that the American hegemony was disappearing. In 1964, the year when Shepard’s first play was staged, traditional notions of community, global boundaries, and citizenship were reinventing themselves once again. American identity, as it appears in much of the literature of the country constitutes for the most part the ideal image of the self-made man. He is supposed to be in charge of his own fate, able to provide for the family, stands as the ruling stick for his sons to live up to and a protector. The idea of self-sufficiency encompasses the institution; adolescent boys are expected to start living independent of their parents, both financially and psychologically. All through Shepard’s plays pervades a strain of escapist philosophy where the lead male role occupants try to shrug off their families’ burden by running away from the scene; to quietly return, often drunk, when they feel nostalgic or responsible.

Masculinity, as an appearance category, refers to the cultural characteristics associated with becoming a man. Adulthood is “a discursive performative architecture that describes and disciplines the cultural acceptation of getting a man” (Barker 115). Adulthood for a man is not just a capital superior of embodied capacity but a silhouette of representation. It is constituted by
means of speaking about and adorning bodies. Adulthood is an area of unified political attempt to be accepted as one of the ideal models of manliness. In Western adeptness the accepted aeon may be the aboriginal time in which some men saw themselves as possessing an ambiguous masculinity. The sense that adulthood is not a habituated article has led to build up for analysis on men and masculinity. Cultural representations of men and masculinity, the appearance of men’s lives as they acquaintance them, and the problems that men face in abreast adeptness are focused on. Traditional adulthood has emphasized the ethics of reason, strength, power, stoicism, action, control, independence, self-sufficiency, acquaintance and plan amidst others. Verbal ability, calm life, tenderness, emotiveness and advice are not recognized. Traditional ethics of adulthood may not serve able-bodied men any of the required qualities accepted in modern society. There has been a speculation recently about the crisis of masculinity. In the West, an ample amount of men, at some point in their lives, are anxious with despair, depression, alcoholism, biologic abuse, violence, suicide, and crime. “Some of the problems men face can be accepted to be an after-effect of the abhorrence amid antecedent notions of adulthood and that which is appropriate to reside acquiescently in the abreast amusing world... the axial problems of men’s lives are abiding in the acceptance of absurd images of adulthood that men try, but fail, to reside up to” (Marranca 17).

Sam Shepard is one of the fundamental figures of the postmodern American dramatists. In the greater part of his plays, Shepard concentrates on portraying the character of the American man and the battles he confronts with a
specific goal to distinguish his manly personality. In the late nineteen seventies, Shepard began composing his family plays. *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977) was the first of his family plays which additionally included *Buried Child* (1978) and *True West* (1980). As indicated by Shepard, the family is the base of everything: “What doesn’t need to do with family? There isn’t anything. Indeed, even a romantic tale needs to do with family, everybody is resulting from a mother and a father, and you go ahead to be a father. It’s an unending cycle (*Buried Child* 39).” The family looks like the entire society. Shepard needed to reprimand his group through showing the crumbled American family.

Shepard’s plays investigate different themes particularly the journey for character, male subjectivity, the profound disintegration of the family, the debasement of the craftsman by corporate greed, the crumbling of the American dream, the vanishing Western wilderness and its way of life, the legends and myths of the American West and references to belongings, blank verse, drugs, Hollywood movies, and different segments of American mainstream culture.

The plays coming after the early period of Shepard’s written work additionally concentrate on the problematic theme of manliness. Family plays such as *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1983) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985) are noticeable cases which demonstrate Shepard’s enthusiasm to depict male mind and male subjectivity. In this later stage, Shepard turns out to be more intrigued by modernized, de-traditionalized male subjects which show characteristics of effeminacy and potentially are under the jeopardy of weakening. In these works,
one can plainly observe Shepard’s slant to turn and separate from machismo
poses for a modern manliness, thus moving from the domain of the physical to
the social and enthusiastic.

Following in some way or another to conventional manliness, while in the
meantime staying away from violence, hostility and mishandling of women,
prompts the humiliation and uneasiness of the male characters. These plays
demonstrate that male character is more subject to the women than is female
personality reliant on men. In doing as such, the plays eventually introduce these
future imperious men as the weaker party in the arrangement for individuation.

In the recent decades men and their relationship with manliness have
dwindled. Be that as it may, the nature of this emergency is not exact.
Emergency means the adjustments in the ramifications of manliness and even
about the potential outcomes of reshaping male interests that have been
happening in the given time frame. To understand the significance of emergency
for changing hegemonic manliness, it is key to know the way of the verifiable
flow of the sex arrange which has prompted the contemporary writers. The
marvel of the emergency of manliness is most certainly not restricted to
contemporary period. Indeed, even in the previous authentic minutes the
characterizing qualities of the sexual orientation, particularly manliness and its
related social representations, have been under extreme investigation. This event
in itself has prompted emergency in sexual orientation hones. For instance, in
late seventeenth century women of England got to be undecided about the
possibility of marriage and family since they viewed marriage and home life as
keeping them to a position of sexual slave and not permitting them to achieve monetary correspondence and building a feeling of independence. Thus the social scenario changed when women tried to secure paid work and free themselves from residential isolation. This made men, for the most part, agonized over their own socially expected positions as spouse and family boss.

The manliness emergency involves the deterioration of the essential example of the customary code of manly characteristics. The answer for emergency of manliness does not mean a dynamic development. It just speaks to men who work as the dominative hegemonic gathering and attempt to recover conventional power over the individuals who might look to challenge their position as hegemonic manliness and its key hegemonic standards. Consequently, “it speaks to a backward or remedial compel that develops under the deceit of progress” (Howson 79).

Sam Shepard is a standout amongst the most productive dramatist of his era. The belief system contained inside Shepard’s plays, in any case, maintains patriarchal qualities, and, so as to keep this philosophy from being strengthened, and to thwart Shepard’s supporters from endeavouring to mimic his development of female characters, it is basic to deconstruct his representation of women. The safeguarding of patriarchal qualities is a typical element of writings produced by men, making the investigation of them essential.

In Shepard’s most punctual plays, male viciousness towards females is evident. In Chicago, Stu pushes Joy out of a bathtub and in Fourteen Hundred
Thousand, Tom assaults Donna with a paintbrush. In Melodrama Play, Donna is clubbed by a policeman and in Icarus’ Mother, Bill and Howard fiercely shakes Pat. In plays like Operation Sidewinder and Forensic and the Navigators, the viciousness increments, reckoning the male brutality which shows up in the later family plays. The plenitude of brutality in Shepard’s plays raises the likelihood that he is endeavouring to investigate the roots and reasons for cliché male conduct in those times in America.

Shepard’s characters long to be sustained in a steady domain; however he is relentless in sensationalizing mother figures who are unequipped for supporting their kids. They are regularly displayed as having undecided natures, as being worried about their youngsters, additionally much more keen on satisfying their own particular wishes. The way that large portions of the mother figures in Shepard’s dramatizations do not take part in sustaining their families does not mean that they can escape the cliché representations. Such characters are cliché representations of “Awful Mothers” because a considerable lot of them do not cater to the idea of nurturers and homemakers,

In Sam Shepard’s plays, the male characters’ cravings to come back to the mother, are identified with their failures to stand up to the different trials of adulthood as well as to make their own particular personalities. Shepard pardons male brutal conduct by suggesting that it is only a declaration of men’s urgency to discover a method for “carrying on like a man.” His characters endeavour to express their personalities by assuming parts from myths and pop culture. It could be contended that the male characters’ proclivity towards taking part in
vicious conduct is only an impression of the route in which people are so vigorously affected by the pictures which encompass them. The mental pictures of their unsure position in society and in the family irritate them that they do not get a sense of fulfilment from their respective roles.

Some critics find fault with Shepard’s earlier representation of female characters who bargained, or were seen as distorted. They were yet guaranteed that with the development of plays like *Fool for Love* and *A Lie of the Mind*, Shepard has been prevailing with regards to portraying women in a satisfactory form. What is considerably all the more upsetting about Shepard’s presentation of the certainty and legacy of male vicious conduct is that he utilizes it to inspire sensitivity for the male characters, which clearly cannot help themselves.

The female characters are occasionally utilized to speak out their own characters’ cravings to accommodate the alternate extremes inside themselves. Additionally they include in their dialogues the male characters’ endeavours and disappointments to participate in a similar procedure. The male characters exhibit a powerlessness to accommodate the manly and female parts inside themselves. This is reflected in their inability to participate in or get involved with women where they do not overwhelm and control them, or potentially to support even ruinous associations with women. Since the female characters endeavour to achieve self-acknowledgment by endeavouring to frame associations with men who will not overwhelm and control them, their yearnings to accomplish self-acknowledgment stay unfulfilled.
Sam Shepard infrequently concentrates on recording women’s encounters or on communicating a “female perspective” in any of his plays. Shepard’s formation of a male saint who aches for the flexibility of the boondocks and rejects household life has influenced his depiction of the American family. In his later plays, Shepard utilizes the idea that men can speak to friends in need; so much so that it is the male characters’ conduct that results in resurrection and recovery, and not the female characters’ activities or capacities.

While Shepard’s style has reliably changed, the one consistency has been the appearance in his work of his present association with his dad. Shepard attempted to restore an association with his dad as his composition moved to a great degree as self-portraying. Furthermore, now, in Shepard’s most recent move, the father figure has lost its importance. His later works centres not on the interruption of the family, but rather on the individual need to associate. His next plays, *The God of Hell* (2004), *Kicking a Dead Horse* (2007), and *Ages of the Moon* (2009) have no father figures. Rather than managing characters tending to the outer powers that shape them, these plays take on a great deal more thoughtful edge. These are not characters frequented by their folks’ oversights, but rather by their own insights. What his later plays share is not the non-attendance of the father figure, but rather the investigation of the primary characters accepting this part. There is no father/child dynamic, however the lead characters manage a level of thoughtfulness and think about their own significance and mortality in connection to their dads, the most piercing and capable.
The present thesis aims at an objective examination of Sam Shepard’s painting of male characters through his plays. The portrayal of manliness or rather its deportation, the canvass of the male against the female and the inner turmoil of men in search for a stable ground in society are discussed in the following chapters. The present thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces Sam Shepard’s different phases of writing and the various influences that one can find in his plays.

The second chapter focuses on the concept of Masculinity as explicated by the well-known researchers in the field of Masculinity studies.

The third chapter is an enumeration of the sort of male domination exhibited in the early plays of Sam Shepard. Sam Shepard is a standout amongst the most productive authors of his era. The belief system contained inside Shepard’s plays, nonetheless, maintains patriarchal qualities. The safeguarding of patriarchal qualities is a typical element of writings produced by men so an investigation into them is important. To keep this belief system from being strengthened, and to upset Shepard’s adherents from endeavouring to impersonate his development of female characters, it is necessary to analyse his representation of women. In Sam Shepard’s plays, the male characters’ yearnings to come back to the mother are identified with their ineptitudes to go up against the different trials of adulthood or potentially to make their own particular characters.
The fourth chapter examines the importance given to female characters in the middle plays of Sam Shepard. Shepard pardons rude male conduct by suggesting that it is just an outflow of men’s urgency to discover a method for carrying on like a man. Since Shepard’s characters endeavour to express their characters by assuming parts from myths and pop culture, it could be contended that the male characters’ proclivity towards participating in vicious conduct is just an impression of the path in which people are so vigorously impacted by the pictures which encompass them.

The fifth chapter focuses on the positive shift towards alternative gender roles in the later plays of Shepard. Gender is a social concept that assigns specific cultural and social roles to both men and women. As a result, it is the society that thrusts expectations of attitude and behaviour on men or women. Gender identity encompasses the mental construction of one’s place in society with respect to roles and responsibilities.

The concluding chapter highlights the paradigm shift in his character portrayal through the last period of his career as a dramatist. Sam Shepard infrequently concentrates on recording women’s encounters or on communicating a “female perspective” in any of his plays. Shepard’s making of a male legend that yearns for the flexibility of the outskirts and rejects residential life has influenced his depiction of the American family. In his later plays, Shepard utilizes the idea that men can speak to guardian angels to closer view the way that it is the male characters’ conduct that results in resurrection and recovery, and not the female characters’ activities or capacities. Sam Shepard
became progressively aware of the savagery in his work and started to re-examine the codes that had hued his standpoint and guided a lot of his conduct. One can see an improvement of female characters through Shepard’s corpus, from the reconciliation of female characters into his plays of the 1980s.