



Representation of Family as a Social Unit in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure*

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Abstract— The following paper entails a study of family as a social unit. The research highlights the effects of socio-economic as well as cultural and political factors on the institution of family. The concept of family has been explored through Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1948) and Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* (1969). The texts belong to two different geographical and cultural set-ups and portray two distinct timelines. The former text has been studied in the context of the failure of the American Dream and the latter in relation to the post-independence Indian disillusionment. This study aims to examine the impact of socio-political and economic context on the functioning of a family and seeks to identify the factors that influence familial relationships and affect the coherence of the institution.



Keywords— *Dysfunctionality, Economy, Family, Society, Values*

I. INTRODUCTION

Human consciousness undergoes myriad psychological fragmentations in the current scenario due to the fast pace of life and ever evolving social paradigms. There is a sharp divide between dreams and realities, which can bring about maladjustment, lack of self-worth, and, in extreme cases, even nervous breakdown. This is a recurrent theme in modern literature. For this study, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* have been chosen to explain the similarity of the problems faced by the respective families despite the geographical and temporal gaps.

Arthur Asher Miller in 1949 won the Pulitzer Prize for his landmark work, *Death of a Salesman*. Through this play written in 1948, Miller investigates the fissures and fractures simmering within the Loman family, along with the struggle of individual values against societal ideals.

Such a struggle is also evident in the works of Mohan Rakesh, a prominent post-independence dramatist from India. Rakesh wrote in Hindi and is said to be one of

the forefathers of the '*Nai Kahani*' movement of the 1950s. He wrote about the "middle-class environs" (Agrawal, 1987) and the "city-circumscribed problems" of his time (Agrawal, 1987). *Aadhe Adhure* (1969) explores the impact of socio-economic conditions on the disintegration of the institution of family. Rakesh analyses relationships on a psychological level in *Aadhe Adhure*, which unfolds the story of a "middle class family struggling to maintain a balance between the traditional and modern values in post colonial India" (Kumar & Sharma, p. 88).

II. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The social contexts of these plays carry a definite significance in the delineation of the characters. In this regard, it is essential to analyse the social context in which Miller's *Salesman* is situated. *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) establishes that the individual belief and inner direction which held the society together were loosening in the post-war American society — it was transitioning to the state of being "other-directed" (Riesman, 1950, p. 65).

Finally, the society of incipient population decline develops in its typical members a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others. These I shall term other-directed people and the society in which they live one dependent on other-direction. (Riesman, 1950, p. 65-66)

By this, Riesman conveys that society depended significantly on other people's approval and acceptance. Conforming to the larger social aspirations became the need of the hour. The war had ended and defining conventions amongst people had undergone a massive transformation, which may have been propelled by the need to regain the pre-war stability that had been lost.

The emerging 1950s also saw the dawn of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. The USA had the world's strongest military, its economy was on an incessant rise. Conflicts, nevertheless, sustained — such as crusades against Communism, the Korean War, the wars in Vietnam, Laotia and Lebanon. These revealed the hidden crevices within the glorified idyllic America. "America at this moment, stands at the summit of the world." (Brinkley, 1995, p. 57), said Winston Churchill, the former British Prime Minister in 1945. The Literature in this period is thereby diverse. It offers a critique of the American Dream, which entitles each American citizen, ordinary or elite, to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Cullen, 2003, p. 4). The July 4, 1776 Declaration of American Independence outlines that all individuals are created equal, and are endowed by the creator certain "unalienable Rights" (Cullen, 2003, p. 38). James Truslow Adams in 1931, in *The Epic of America*, defines the American Dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man" (Cullen, 2003, p. 7). This dream was initially a "spiritual pursuit" (Bruno, 2019), a constant drive of the "indomitable spirit which drives the quest for freedom, fortunes, liberty and welfare in the American person." (Bruno, 2019). This dream took the shape of continuously aiming towards "upward mobility" (Cullen, 2003, p. 18).

In *Aadhe Adhure*, Mohan Rakesh gives a picture of the post-independence Indian scenario. Gandhi's idealism, his spiritualism and the ideas of self-reliance crumbled down in the face of communal disharmony that ensued because of the partition of India. Later, the problems of unemployment, poverty, and position of women in the society led writers like Mohan Rakesh to look wistfully at the belying idealisms that accompanied the dream for independence. Many issues at the forefront of a newly emerged economy, such as the devaluation of the currency, inflation and recession, crisis in agriculture, serious food

shortages, and influx of refugees from Bangladesh, became the subjects of drama in Hindi and regional Indian languages by playwrights such as Mannu Bhandari and Bhasham Sahni. The Chinese aggression (1962), the Indo-Pak war (1965), and the severe drought of 1965-66 led to further escalation of the problems. Some of these social issues can be seen in the background of *Aadhe Adhure*. Discussing the post-Independence situation in India, Kumar & Sharma point out that:

From villages to towns, people were suffering from immense poverty and hardships, the economy was hit hard and people were dying of starvation. The traditional family structure was at the verge of collapse and the system of joint family was getting replaced by small and nuclear families with the changed gender roles. (p. 88)

Even after decades of independence, Indian middle and lower class still survived on the ration administered by the government. (Chaturvedi & Ravi, 2020, p. 27) The rate of poverty in the nation was also increasing day by day:

Dandekar and Rath, on behalf of the then Indian government, estimated that the poverty rate in the 1960s remained generally constant at 41%. Ojha, in contrast, estimated that there were 190 million people (44%) in India below the official poverty limit in 1961 and that this below-poverty line number increased to 289 million people (70%) in 1967. Bardhan also concluded that Indian poverty rates increased through the 1960s, reaching a high of 54%. (Wikipedia Contributors)

This was also the time when India launched the aspirational Five-Year Plans. These were national economic programmes which took inspiration from Joseph Stalin's implementation of one such in the late 1920s Soviet Union. *Aadhe Adhure* was written in 1969, also when the fourth Five-year plan was launched. It aimed at "growth with stability" (Wikipedia Contributors) and a progressive achievement towards rapid self-reliance. This promise of growth, self-reliance and stability of the fourth Five-Year Plan is eerily similar to the assurance of the American Dream.

While the political and economic conditions invariably affect the society as a whole, it also has a huge impact on the basic unit of the society, the family. The following section of the paper presents the sociological viewpoint regarding the concept of family, the values that keep it together, and the factors that bring about its disintegration.

III. FAMILY AS SOCIAL UNIT

Popular cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead identifies the overarching role of the environment in shaping individuals more than race or ethnicity. According to Mead, the environment includes "family structure, socioeconomic status, and exposure to language", which affect a person's overall development. (Wikipedia Contributors) A family is a social unit, the smallest and the most fundamental. It functions within a particular social structure and as a constituent part of the larger society. It connects the individual to wide-ranging social networks. The term 'unit' reflects a shared sense of relationships, values, beliefs, identities, goals, and lifestyles, which make a family function cohesively. Social unit also means that a family both affects and is affected by the larger socio-economic, political, and cultural changes that take place over time. In relation to this, many sociologists attempt to define the institution of family and its interconnected facets.

The term 'family' has its roots in the original Latin word 'famulus'. 'Familus' in Latin denotes 'servant'. originally, the word Family stood for all those people who lived together in a household, such as servants, relatives, tenants, etc. However, with time the word 'family' came to be used for those who are related by blood, even if their place of residence is not within the same household. Family as a group was then defined by many sociologists, who then attempted to delineate its technicalities in a logical manner.

Burgess and Locke define family as "a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture." (Rao, 2006, p. 349). Macher describes it as "a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to children to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children." (ibid., p. 349).

A family forms the foundational structure of a society. It provides individuals with the primary sense of socialization, societal values, ideals, norms, roles, and responsibilities. It is a primary group, and C.H. Cooley, an American sociologist, describes it as an association of "mutual aid and companionship" (Rao, 2006, p. 236). This association is along the lines of "sympathy" and "mutual identification" (Cooley, qtd. in Rao, 2006; p. 236). A family thus develops a person's ideals and 'self'. This 'self' goes on to formulate the fully formed 'individual' of a larger society. Therefore, there is a deep interconnectivity between a society and its constituent families. The ideals of one influence another's. Moreover, C.N. Shankar Rao defines in the 2006 revised edition of his book *Sociology: Principles*

of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought that a primary group provides "satisfaction to psychological needs" and "acts as an agent of social control" (Rao, 2006, p. 238-239). If these needs and controls are not met on time or properly, chaos within the family becomes unavoidable.

In this regard, various elements are involved in the functioning of a family, the primary one being the institution of marriage. According to the structural-functional viewpoint within sociology, marriage is a site for regulating sexual behaviours and providing suitable environments for nurturing children. (Wamoyi et. al, 2015). The social exchange theory within Sociology also delineates how social interactions are based upon a cost-benefit analysis, determining potential risks and benefits. Marriage is also one such interaction. It is a site for possible conflicts, where a family might also get entangled in suffocating power dynamics and broken communication patterns. Such unresolved alterations might also lead to a chain of dysfunctional events, potentially breaking the family's build. A family also participates together in social mobility. Social mobility is the movement of individuals and social groups within different strata of society, along with changes in their employment security, income and expenditure, and material and social advancement. Therefore, financial security and upward mobility are two key aspects that influence the level to which a family remains tightly knit.

Families are primary providers of comfort and emotional support during times of distress. They develop the first sense of belongingness within individuals. A healthy family system ensures the smooth functioning of the larger social climate. Families have one another important function: the assigning of roles and responsibilities. They also pass down values and cultures, bestowing traditions and the bequeathing of societal expectations.

According to leading Sociologists, such as Rao (2006), Cooley, Mead, and Macher, it can be safely concluded that a family prepares its members to function as 'individuals' in the real world. Above all, a family has the trait of adaptability in accordance with the prevailing societal fluctuations.

3.1 Family in *Death of a Salesman*

Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, written in 1948, represents the struggle of Willy Loman, a salesman who finds it difficult to make ends meet as the sole breadwinner for his family. He is fired from his job after years of dedicated service and ultimately realises that he was never "well-liked" (Miller, 1969, p. 19). Miller drew inspiration for this play from his real-life uncle, Manny Newman, from whom the playwright derived the idea of writing about a salesman.

This play unravels the dysfunctional family of Willy and Linda Loman and their two sons. Willy is an old salesman who “loses his grip on reality, hopelessly trapped and entangled in his own delusion” (Benziman, 2005, p. 25.). The play follows the discordant father-son relationship between Biff and Willy due to Biff finding out about Willy's infidelity.

The play also reflects upon the bond between Willy and Linda. It showcases a family's journey trying to survive through struggles and crises. However, it is eminently a depiction of the fatal clash between Willy's long-held faith in the American Dream and his fear that though his sons were “well-liked” (Miller, 1969, p. 21), they too will be “just a guy” like Willy himself. (ibid, p. 85).

The play probes the intricacies of Willy's psychological complexities. His coping mechanism is to escape into past reminiscences, which form a major portion of the play. Ultimately, he is left heartbroken and accepts his fate, that his idea that “a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked!” (ibid, p. 62) is utterly false. Willy's frustration and dejection lead to crevices in his marriage. However, Linda's deep understanding of him and her perennial love and concern stabilise an otherwise “phoney” and “fake” marriage. Willy, too, sees her as his chief support. Linda remains her husband's emotional anchor until Willy Loman commits suicide. Biff, in the requiem, remarks: “He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.” (Miller, 1969, p. 103)

Therefore, the family in *Death of a Salesman* can be perceived as a microcosmic unit of the society through which the playwright reveals the vacuity of marriage and loss of faith in modern times beset with materialism and economic prosperity at the cost of values and codes of conduct. Its fragmentation symbolises the much wider disintegration of the upheld ideals of the American Dream. The protagonist Willy Loman's struggle is the struggle of each common citizen: to uphold the utopian American virtues against the rapidly surging capitalism and the tragedy of a common man, who wanted to be remembered and have a big crowd at his funeral.

3.2 Family in *Aadhe Adhure*

Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* follows the story of a similar dysfunctional family, the difference here being of total disintegration — the conflict evidently more on the ‘individual versus family’ front. First writing short stories, Rakesh ventured into writing novels, finding his purpose in the realism of the stage. He presents the character of Savitri, the laborious breadwinner of her family. She must work due to her husband Mahendranath's unemployment. Financial hardships are bitter and weigh down on the institutions of marriage and family. Amidst this, interpersonal

understanding too suffers a severe blow. We see Savitri constantly nagging her husband, emasculating, and castrating him. His ineptitude at providing his family with monetary security leads to his position and identity as a patriarch being questioned. His character suffers various opprobrium.

The play catches sight of constant fights. Savitri vacillates towards leaving and develops aimed closeness with other men, in search of a “complete” one (Kumar & Sharma, p. 96). There is a sudden revelation of Mahendra's animalistic side and his violence upon Savitri. This violence is symbolic of Mahendra's deep-seated frustration — a consequence of the larger socio-political situation.

The play ends as it began — with an unresolved situation. Towards the end, the audience realises that their failure to function together as a social unit has drifted the members apart. They were unable to choose between family and material security. The story foregrounds how economic factors trample over basic human needs of love and belongingness.

IV. DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

The two plays represent two distinct families, set apart geographically, temporally, and culturally. Yet, the members of both families grapple with similar economic constraints despite the glaring chasm between the developed country America and India, which in the 1960s was still shedding the burden of colonial rule. Brown reflects upon this dysfunctionality in a relevant manner:

A dysfunctional family is one in which conflict, misbehaviour, and instability are present. Within a dysfunctional family system where abuse and/or neglect is present, other family members are often forced to accommodate and enable destructive behaviours. (Brown, 2021)

Family systems theorists argue that a dysfunctional family is motivated, “usually unconsciously, to maintain that system”, despite its growing ineffectiveness. (Chavkin & Chavkin, 2015, p. 35) This is primarily the case in *Salesman* and *Aadhe Adhure*. Nonetheless, there is not one but many elements that build up this larger dysfunctionality.

4.1 Marriage & The Man-Woman Relationship

The man-woman relationship in the two plays exemplifies the aftereffects that destabilising socio-economic conditions render on interpersonal dynamics. The post-WW scenario is one of fragmentation, ambiguity, and growing individuality. This ardently affects the longevity and strength of institutions such as marriage. In *Death of a Salesman*, we see the frustrations of these times exhibited

in Willy Loman's agitation and verbal abuse towards his wife, Linda:

LINDA: Willy, dear, I got a new kind of American-type cheese today. It's whipped.

WILLY: Why do you get American when I like Swiss?

LINDA: I just thought you'd like a change...

WILLY: I don't want a change! I want Swiss cheese. Why am I always being contradicted? (Miller, 1969, p. 8)

The above lines reflect a loss of control on Willy's part. A similar exasperation is seen in the character of Mahendranath, in *Aadhe Adhure*. His wife, Savitri, brings home the bacon. Mahendra's position as the patriarch, therefore seems to be threatened. This leads Mahendra to an explainable identity crisis. He, in a manner, feels emasculated and says, "Because, because, because! Everyone finds some cause or other! What is my status in this house? Silent acceptance, perpetual snubs, constant insults, is that all I deserve after so many years?" (Rakesh; ed. Basu, trans. Bitra, 2011, p. 26). Such instances in both plays showcase the family's larger dysfunctionality arising from the fragmentation within the institution of marriage. This crumbling results from the clash of traditional gender roles with the needs and requirements of the modern scenario, along with the impact of the wider collapsing social context.

However, Willy and Linda's relationship is characterized by compassion and empathy. Linda believes in the sustenance of Willy's dreams, and Willy depends on Linda for emotional support. This could also be a characteristic of the times. Albeit centres had collapsed, social institutions still had whatever was left of the pre-war stability. But Linda is also "what we would call today an enabler, who makes excuses for her husband and encourages him to believe in illusions" (Chavkin & Chavkin, 2015, p. 31). In traditional terminology, she is the 'ideal' wife, but through feminist analysis, Linda bears the emotional abuse of her vexed husband. However, upon considering the social context, we see this fracture within institutions and relationships as an obvious byproduct of the modern and post-modern scenarios.

The question then arises is whether Linda Loman would have stayed provided she had her own financial independence or whether she is simply a compassionate wife who understands her husband's difficulties. Perhaps Linda is the character who is the authentic success of the American Dream, for F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote on America's history in 1937 that it is "the history of all aspiration — not just the American dream but the human

dream" (Cullen, 2003, p. 183). Linda sustains this "human dream" (ibid, p. 183) and its originally held values.

In *Aadhe Adhure*, apart from monetary issues, growing social debates on individualism and female emancipation also lead to the above discussed disintegration:

... cultural norms and personal expectations appear to have been shifting. What we find, then, is that people are moving in and out of marriage more freely than in the past because marriage is less and less bound up with social and economic status. Rising divorce rates may be viewed as an indicator of changing personal aspirations, coupled with greater economic opportunities for women. (Ross & Sawhill, 1977, p. 85)

The conflict in this play arises due to the clash of new cultures with the older ones. Consumerism, commercialization, and the collapse of gender norms come in conflict with traditional gender roles and the pursuit of family life as the primary social aim. The play has been written about two decades after Miller's *Salesman*. Hence, the institutions that were earlier in a state of instability have now collapsed on a deeper level.

The man-woman relationship in this play centres around the individualities of the characters. Mahendra and Savitri struggle to maintain the structure of a family or the institution of marriage. The required compromise and understanding, as was present between the Loman couple, is absent. The relationships thus disintegrate due to the suffocating power dynamics — that of gender, hierarchy, power, patriarchy, and economy. The most important differentiation is between the two wives: Linda and Savitri. There is an evident lack of understanding on the latter's part, and albeit the play is feminist in many respects, Diana Dimitrova explains the sudden ideological shift in the play rather aptly:

Though the woman is at the centre of the play and we sympathise with her throughout, there is a shift towards the man's point of view at the end of the drama. The playwright makes us believe that it is the woman's aspirations for the new, the different and the inaccessible that accounts for the problems. (Diana Dimitrova, 2004, p. 387)

Savitri's rebellion, decision to leave, and search for a man who can provide material security illustrate the overpowering self, her 'I' against Linda's 'and 'we'. Therefore, the conflict arises due to the inability of a family to work together as a social unit.

4.2 Psychology and Catharsis: The Need for Emotional Recalibration

In both plays, the characters' voices, delusions, and denials represent their varying mental complexities. For instance, loneliness plays a critical role in Willy Loman's story. Willy's hallucinations, his slipping away into the world of past occurrences, are sheer escapism. It allows him to reach a time when his dreams seem tangible. However, Willy's delusions are shared possessions of the society in which he lives. His psychological condition is "represented as the result not only of his own mental constitution, but also of his embracing of some of the dominant values, aspirations, and dreams of his society". (Benziman, 2005, p. 26) This society is inherently lonely amidst its rapid advancements. Willy's affair, too, is an escape for him to seek excitement and change out of his growing loneliness.

Death of a Salesman, therefore, comes to represent the actual psychological repercussion of the American Dream — where one man's hopes were the hopes of many. In this regard, Willy's retaliation against his commonality is his denial of accepting his society's failure. Willy's hidden desire, behind his overt dreams of success, is to play the flute-like his father. He wishes to roam, to be remembered by his family, and most importantly, to be remembered as a salesman (just like Dave Singleman):

But it's so beautiful up there, Linda; the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden, I'm goin' off the road! I'm tellin' ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody. (Miller, 1969, p. 6)

The above aspects manifest themselves in *Aadhe Adhure* as well. Just as Willy dug the garden right before committing suicide, the characters in Rakesh's play perform absurd actions to escape the immediate need for emotional recalibration. Mahendra's violence, the hint of Savitri's various relationships, Binni's runaway marriage, Ginni's sexual innuendos, Ashok's pastime of cutting out pictures, the constant fights, and the overall absurd shifts in conversations — all are actions representing the search of a purpose in a seemingly haywire existence. This emotional calibration is somehow even achieved in *Salesman*. However, the blow is severe enough for Willy. His death symbolises the diminishing values of the primordial American Dream — the death of man's "spiritual pursuit" (Bruno, 2019). *Death of a Salesman* therefore becomes a mirrored reflection of its time. *Aadhe Adhure*, too, comes in a similar league. The play reveals the post-independence disillusionment of Indian society, and the family in the play projects a microcosmic view of the macro problems with

which the country grappled in these specific historical contexts. The family's aspirations, its search for economic stability, and the fractured interpersonal relationships give the audience a sense of deep-seated discontent and frustration that a large section of the population underwent. The play allowed the audience to connect to the mimetic but authentic resemblances of their own selves on the stage, on a face-to-face level.

Moreover, there is an uncanny resemblance in the mannerisms of the characters. For instance, Biff and Binni exhibit the tendency to run away. This running away is more on a psychological front than physical. Murray Bowen is a family systems theorist who has termed "the flight from unresolved emotional ties to one's family of origin, typically manifested by withdrawing or running away from the parental family, or denying its current importance in one's life" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, p. 517) as "emotional cutoff" (Chavkin & Chavkin, 2015, p. 32). Also, while on the one hand Willy's denial takes his life, Savitri's denial to accept the universal incompleteness of almost all men nearly takes the life of her husband. Therefore, both plays reflect the death of individual passions and functional collective identities in a commercial world of rat-race.

4.3 Children and Generational Conflicts

One crucial element in both plays is the generational conflict. In *Death of a Salesman*, the relationship that Willy has with his sons is dependent on his expectation that they will sustain his dreams:

Biff and Happy idolized their father, whose boasting they believed, while Willy worshipped his two sons, especially Biff, whose athletic ability is illogically regarded by this domineering salesman as proof that his oldest son is destined to be a titan in the business world. (Chavkin & Chavkin, 2015, p. 30)

This relationship is thus based upon idealization and disillusionment, both from the side of Willy as well as his sons. Biff's realization of his father's infidelity is his first disillusionment. He realises that his father, whom he once considered a hero, is just a common man — a "phony little fake!" (Miller, 1969, p. 89). Conversely, Happy is the "true heir of his father's romantic fables and self-deception" (Benziman, p. 38). He declares:

I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him. (Miller, 1969, 138-39).

Happy is Willy's alter ego. Nonetheless, it is implicit that he too would end up along the same lines as his father: on the road of disillusionment.

The above scenario reflects postmodernity in a clear-cut manner. There is explicitly visible between the parents and their children a wider generational gap, where the raging spirit of adventure and exploration of the latter comes in fatal conflict with the predetermined expectations of the former. Willy's bestowing of his aspirations upon Biff is an exemplification of the above fact. This resultantly leads to a rebellion from Biff's end.

In *Aadhe Adhure*, we trace the evidence of "dysfunctional transactional patterns" (Goldenberg, Goldenberg, and Pelavin, 2011, p. 449), where one generation's dysfunctional patterns are carried forward by the next. While Happy illustrates this phenomenon in *Salesman*, we also detect it in *Aadhe Adhure* through the elder daughter, Binni. It is implicitly hinted that she elopes and marries not for love but for security. Similarly, the character of Ashok is the primary representative of two crucial aspects:

- the disillusioned reality of the post-independence Indian youth, and,
- the dejected mental state of his father, as he is seen expressing empathy for him towards the very end of the play.

Ashok represents the collective psyche of the youth of his age: the active, volatile, and 'violent' Indian youth of newly independent India, whose growing individualism came in lethal contact with the shackles of traditional roles and responsibilities. Just as Biff, this conflict is the cause of Ashok's inherent frustration.

4.4 Values

Values form an integral part of the mechanisms within the two plays. In both, two or more social institutions clash with each other, resulting in a lack of social order and control. We thereafter see a collapse within institutions such as marriage, family, and economy, along with the collapse of values. Materialism is one of the many aspects leading to this collapse. Aysel Erciş & Bahar Türk define materialism as follows:

Materialism is "an orientation which views material goods and money as important for personal happiness and social progress" as defined in early research (Ward & Wackman, 1971). Belk (1983, 1984; 1985), Ger and Belk (1996) developed definitions and suggested that materialism was a function of one's personality, reflecting traits of possessiveness, envy, and non-generosity. (Erciş & Türk, 2017)

In this regard, albeit the institutions of marriage and family seem to crumble in *Death of a Salesman*, they keep on surviving until the very end. The reason for this is a concrete emotional appeal and understanding amongst the characters. Willy's infidelity, while he still loves his wife, illustrates how a man's loneliness and failed, defeated aspirations lead him astray. He then chooses pleasure to derive meaning from a vanquished situation, yet bears the guilt of his actions.

In a similar manner, *Aadhe Adhure* then presents a mini-society where individual needs and expectations tower over familial values and solidarity. The Dysfunctional family in the play represents the society that was still evolving in post-independence India. Mohan Rakesh presents the fracturing of the institution of the family as the basic social unit. The idea of "survival of the fittest" (Darwin, 1869, p. 9) is shown to take precedence, leading to unabashed dismissal of the beliefs that hold people together. Therefore, the values of compassion, understanding, and kindness that sustained the familial bond in *Salesman* break down in *Aadhe Adhure*. The title suggests incompleteness, unwholesomeness, and a psychological, emotional, and social breakdown.

In this regard, the two primary differences which are then observed between the plays are i) the expression of values and ii) the expression of interpersonal harmony. We see in *Aadhe Adhure* that even when Savitri tries to break away from the traditional system, there seems to be a force that holds her onto it steadfastly. These forces are societal structures of marriage and family, not values, morals, or the strength within interpersonal relationships. Savitri's temporary leaving and her following return explicate the irreversible divide in her, the divide of a prototypical modern conscience — the dilemma of Prufrock's "Do I dare?" (Eliot, 38). This family's dysfunctionality arises from the members' shared limitedness, who function merely as an economic and not a social unit. Rajinder Nath asserts in this regard that "Whenever bonds of love and concern are replaced by materialistic compulsion, the 'hell' is inevitable. And that is what *Aadhe Adhure* is about" (qtd. in Rath and Sarangi, 2020; p. 602). In *Aadhe Adhure*, we find seeds of individualism in almost all the characters. The force holding a unit together is absent. However, this very force was present in *Salesman*, for in it there does exist a cordial bond between the members. The family constantly strives towards achieving resolution and balance. There is a man wishing hopeful ends for his family, a wife who stands firm with her husband, and sons who try to ease the worries of their dying father. Nonetheless, while the Loman family's values sustain their togetherness until the very end, the crumbling socio-economic conditions of the times take a rough toll on their hopes and resilience.

In both the plays, we see the struggle of individual aspirations against familial good, where family, more than an integrating structure, seems to be a restricting one (against personal yearnings). Economic hardships bear over the coherence of two families. The values are sustained in one play, but in another, they break down. In none, however, they seem to be lessening the distance among the members.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the modern psychological and social disintegration that adversely impact families. The collapse of social institutions is an inevitable consequence of dwindling value systems and shrinking ethical frameworks. These are essential forces to keep society from breaking apart into a disharmonious cacophony of incoherent voices, that echo selfish self-aggrandisement and glory at the expense of common welfare for all. These changes deeply impact interpersonal dynamics, where the three Cs — consumerism, capitalism, and commercialization — have a grave impact on individual expectations and societal ideals. This has a negative impact on the cohesiveness of social institutions and the morals and values that once held relationships intact.

It is, therefore, concluded that the social unit of a family is regulated and influenced by socio-cultural and economic changes. These factors cause clashes at multiple levels:

- i) the clash between individual and society,
- ii) the clash between utopian ideals and dystopian reality, and,
- iii) the clash between traditional institutions and the emerging modern and postmodern ethos

Leo Tolstoy says in *Anna Karenina*, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Tolstoy, 1878). Families that can resist the clashes cited above are happy, and this is possible through free communication, mutual love, trust, faith, and compassion. In the absence of these, the detrimental impact of adverse forces can be noticed, as in the unhappy families of the Loman's and Savitri's, which are "unhappy" in their own ways.

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