

The Theme of Social Responsibility in the play *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller

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Abstract

This article focuses on the theme of social responsibility in the play *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller. Every individual should have some social responsibilities in their day to day life. In this play *All My Sons* Arthur Miller clearly reveals the loss of social responsibility and morality due to self-protection. The main character of the play known as Joe Keller who has lost the social responsibility for his own sake and only at the end of the play he realized his blunder mistake. There are other characters in the play who have also broken their social responsibility. This play reveals the importance of social responsibility of every individual in the world.

Key Words : Social Responsibility, Individual, Self-protection.

Introduction

All My Sons is a play by Arthur Miller and it has three-acts in it. The major theme of this play is social responsibility. In this play there are conflicts like family loyalties versus moral responsibility versus social responsibility. *All My Sons* is a play which follows the unities of time, place and action. This play is written based on a true story.

Arthur Miller was an American playwright and essayist. *All My Sons* is the one of his best known plays. Arthur Miller in maximum of his works he brings out the theme of social responsibility, social awareness and ethics. In this play, Arthur Miller wants to expose that an individual's social responsibilities are inseparable from his personal life, that he is as responsible to society as he is to his family.

Joe Keller believes that his individual responsibility to his family is more important than his responsibility to the society. Joe Keller completely ignore his social responsibility due to his self-protection and individual responsibility. Due to Joe's loss of his social responsibility, the death of twenty-one pilots has miserably occurred and also the death of his own son Larry has happened. From this Arthur Miller tries to expose the fact that an individual responsibility is not only important but also their social responsibility is as much Important to survive as a whole unity.

The Loss of Social Responsibility and It's impact

The Title *All My Sons* is taken from the last words of Joe Keller who is the tragic character in the play. His sense of guilt before his death, he quoted the words of his dead son Larry who made penance for the death of twenty-one pilots due to his loss of social responsibility in order to exhibit his individual responsibility to his family. This emphasis the importance of social responsibility. Larry's death made Joe Keller to learn his social responsibility. Joe listened Chris realises Larry's letter. So he said with broken heart, "They were all my sons"(*All My Sons* 89).

Joe Keller viewed the personal benefit to his family as outweighing the hurt done to society. Finally the death of his own son Larry shows him that he cannot view his family as separate from the society. Joe Keller admits that he is directly responsible for his son's death because of his loss of social responsibility. If I have the means, I have the responsibility to employ them says Brooks in *The Scions of Shannara*. From this the power of social responsibility is clearly revealed.

Joe Keller's obsession with profit that created the entire chain of corruption whereas, Joe Keller views his responsibility to his family, but he can't view the social responsibility. The society and the personal life are combined one and it is inseparable which forgotten by Joe Keller.

There are other characters in the play who have also forgot the social responsibility, one such character as Dr. Jim Bayliss laments the role of money than the role of morality in his own life which prevents him from doing the medical research. This loss of social responsibility of Dr. Jim Bayliss is also considered as an important reason for the miserable incidents in the play. Sue Bayliss is one such character where she wants the idealistic

Chris to leave town, for he influences her husband in a way that goes against Sue's designs and this exhibits the loss of social responsibility of Sue Bayliss. These losses of social responsibility by Joe Keller, Dr. Jim Bayliss and Sue Bayliss leads to the death of twenty-one pilots and it causes troubles to their own life. Joe Keller who loss his own son Larry due to his loss of social responsibility. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequence of one's acts says Gandhi.

It is clear that the social responsibility is as much important as that of an individual's own responsibility.

At the end of the play Joe Keller faces the truth of his own character and assumes his responsibility. As a result of his loss of social responsibility Joe Keller has lost the respect of his own son Chris, a young man of principle. Both Joe Keller and his son Larry commit suicide out of Joe Keller's loss of social responsibility. Joe Keller's selfish point of view of the world is juxtaposed with that broader point of view of his son Chris who understands the interconnected of the world and its society of the diverse communities and individuals.

Conclusion

This article highlights the interdependence of people and societies. The importance of social responsibility is emphasized throughout in the play *All My Sons*. Every individual has certain social responsibility to other people and thus his/her actions have ramifications for the greater society. The social responsibility and self protections are equally important and both should be treated well. If an individual his/her own responsibility is given much preference than the his/her social responsibility then the society will suffer which eventually causes troubles to his/her individual's life. So, the social responsibility of every individual are very essential.

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