Abstract

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Title of Study : “Humanitarian Concerns in the Select Plays of Edward Albee”

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Scope and Method of Study:
This dissertation endeavors to analyze the plays of Edward Albee viz. The Zoo Story (1959), The Death of Bessie Smith (1960), The Sandbox (1960), The American Dream (1961), Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1962), Tiny Alice (1964), A Delicate Balance (1969), All Over (1971), Seascape (1975), The Man Who Had Three Arms (1983), Three Tall Women (1991), and The Goat (2002), to establish the Albee’s humanitarian concerns enshrined in almost all his plays. In the process, this study traces the evolution of Albee’s dramatic art besides reaffirming the societal concerns of Albee who has used his theater and art to shock his audience in order to help them cast away the evil strictures of his highly ambitious affluent society.
Findings and Conclusions:

A close scrutiny of the plays of Edward Albee selected to conduct this study reveals evidences of loss of love and compassion, the complacency and cant, the painful breakdown in communication and human relationships, the racial discriminations, the bad preference of artificial to real values, the insidious inclination towards illusion, the corroding moral and religious codes, the consumerist bent, the familial frictions, the all-pervading American Dream that turned nightmarish in the lives of many, the corruptions in the Campus and the Church and many other maladies of modern life in almost all his plays. What stands out in the end is that, in spite of Albee’s preoccupation with these ills of a decomposing society, beneath the anger and aggressive text and themes of death and depression, there is an all pervading affirmative experience providing pills for all the ills. The Zoo Story is life-affirming, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is life giving and highly optimistic, A Delicate Balance instills courage and confidence in Harry and Edna to boldly face the unknown fear, and above all, there is the play on Life namely Seascape. Life is precious. It should be lived at any cost. The discontent, caused by all the ailments, is viewed by Albee positively. To him, discontent is a mark of development. It is the very source of evolution. It should be understood in the right spirit. Through Charlie and Nancy, the human couple, and Leslie and Sarah, the lizards, Albee wants to communicate that we should learn to live with all the litters, however dangerous life may be. The message that this highly controversial yet highly compassionate playwright of contemporary America intends to drive home is that a dangerous participation is better than no participation.