Chapter - V

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to analyse the plays of Albee to probe into the humanitarian concerns with which he writes his plays. In the process, this study has enumerated all the humanistic concerns enshrined and exhibited in his plays. Edward Albee does not believe in any labels. An adamantine voice in contemporary American theatre, he does not want to be limited to any simple classification. In an interview with Allan Wallach in 1979, Albee said: “I dismiss all labels. Theatre of the Absurd, Angry Young Man, Playwright of protest. Labels are so facile, and they are substitute for conscientious analysis so much of the time. I like to think that my plays are out to change people, out to make them more aware of themselves ...” (Conversations with Edward Albee, p.132)

In fact, his contribution to American theatre is too great to be confined to any particular categorization. Critics have been trying to see Albee framed inside a particular label. Because of
Albee’s focus on confrontation and death and on gloomy issues such as betrayal, abandonment, self-destruction, dismemberment, moral rectitude, marital vacuity, sterility, gay affairs and so on, Gilbert Debusscher, for example, brands him a pessimistic, defeatist or nihilist playwright. These labelling are clearly misleading. McCarthy in her book Edward Albee writes:

The intensity of Albee’s views of American society and his passionate attack on complacency and cant has not proved congenial to all his critics. He has indicted a futile materialism in a witty and abrasive style which has made the underlying feelings all the more convincing and disconcerting. He seemed to hold up a distorting mirror to society, showing its values to be incoherent and inhuman. With the appearance of The American Dream, the playwright could be anathematised as nihilist, immoral and defeatist.... However, the bleakness of Albee’s vision was not absurdism nor any aspects of philosophical nihilism; but the result of a commitment to values he saw neglected or ignored. (8)

Roudane too expresses a similar view in his book Understanding Edward Albee. He says that any careful reader or viewer of Albee’s plays will certainly discover an affirmative vision of human experience, one dispelling Albee’s reputation as a
nihilistic dramatist. Underneath the external action, aggressive texts, and obvious preoccupation with death lies an inner drama that discloses the playwright's compassion for his fellow human beings.

Actually, the most influential labelling of Albee comes from Martin Esslin who assigns The Zoo Story and The American Dream to the savagely ironical world of the theatre of the absurd. Esslin has truly opened the floodgate for the numerous critics and research scholars to ambitiously delve into his plays in search of the absurdist traits that Esslin noticed. Albee is not happy with this absurdist labelling. He clearly dismisses this label in his article "Which theatre is the absurd one?"

Though Albee is not happy with such a label, it is evident that most of his plays share much in common with the playwrights of the avant-garde tradition. However, he is not an ardent follower of Sartre or Camus or Beckett. As he is a playwright who is often torn between a desire for the apparent security of the social realism of his illustrious predecessors and the never-ending temptation to
experiment, he has dared to create a tension between realism and the theatre of the absurd. It was his thirst for theatrical experiments, coupled with his intends to shock his audience, which has actually led him to experiment his theatre by employing the absurdist techniques. Also, he believes that any deep-rooted tumours cannot be removed with soft realistic therapies. Hence, he has administered the absurdist drugs to effectively bombard the malignancy in the mind set of his generation. C.P.Singh observes that “Albee has been attracted to the theatre of absurd mainly because of the kind of social criticism he seems to be engaged in.” (21).

Indeed, Albee has used the absurdist traits in his plays as mere means to shock his audience. Though the basic situation of his plots, the aberrant acts of his characters and his shockingly witty and abrasive diction may tilt the scale towards absurdism, his highly positive dramatic vision separates him from the world of Beckett and the other avant-garde playwrights. David D. Galloway in his “The Absurd Hero in American Literature” states:
"Such a classification is clearly misguided, however, for there are important distinctions to be drawn between the vision of Samuel Beckett or Eugene Ionesco and Edward Albee’s basically humanistic stance.” (74)

It is true that in Edward Albee’s work, there is a tension between realism and the theatre of the absurd. Like European Absurdist writers, Albee has tried to dramatize man’s condition, but whereas Beckett, Genet, Ionesco and Pinter present that reality in all its alogical absurdity, Albee has been preoccupied with illusions that screen man from reality. To the playwrights of the theatre of the absurd, man’s existence on this meaningless universe is essentially hopeless. Man is believed to be completely cut off from all his religious and transcendental roots. His condition is perceived to be absurd. But Albee feels that a man who is cut off from his religious and transcendental roots still remains a man. Only when he cuts himself off from the reality of his situation he loses his humanity and becomes absurd. Albee is not concerned with the
absurdity of reality but rather the absurdity of illusion.

The target for his attack is the American dream, which is the main source of all illusions in American life. This dream promises a far-fetched reality which remains a far cry for most of the dreamers of his highly ambitious society. Though the dream promises only bed of roses all the way, not everyone is fortunate enough to lead a successful life. There are many who fall on the distresses of life. For them life becomes a mere struggle for existence. The perilous picture of the dingy rooming house in *The Zoo Story* is but a symbolic representation the hostile reality of modern life. Albee wants to shake people off this drowsy numbness caused by the many hemlocks of contemporary America. He is not happy with the Peters who drive people like Jerry to desperation and to death. Jerry is not an imaginary character. Jerry and all the other people who live in the rooming house in the play are very much real according to the playwright. According to Matthew Roudane, who quoted a 1974 interview with
Albee in his *Understanding Edward Albee*, the playwright maintained that he got the idea for *The Zoo Story* while working for Western Union: “I was always delivering telegrams to people in rooming houses. I met [the models for] all those people in the play in rooming houses. Jerry, the hero, is still around” (27). He has only upturned the illusionary boulders to force his audience to face the brute reality. He does not create illusions on the stage, rather slaps his audience with the irritating reality by destroying those soothing illusions. His plays are but waking calls for everyone to come to terms with the actual world.

As a humanitarian, Albee is well aware of his responsibilities as a dramatist. In an interview with Miss Gorden in 1966, Albee puts on record, “it is a playwright’s responsibility to reflect and comment on his time as accurately as he possibly can. These, it seems to me, are the fresh visions- honest critical comment on the times.” (*Conversations with Edward Albee*, p.70). It is also worth mentioning here that while comparing the dramatic art with the
television and the film, Albee has commented in 
*Deconstructing Character: Transformations in Postmodernist American Drama*, that “the theatre is directed towards making one aware of oneself rather than escape [that] awareness. This awareness is also a means of bringing about transformation, of perceiving change as a process of adjustment, of altering social perspectives” (105).

Throughout his career, he has been only practising what he has preached as the purpose of an artist. The probing perusals of his dramatic exploits carried out in the previous chapters have evidently and sufficiently revealed his concerns about the wellbeing of his people. The humanitarian concerns of the playwright have operated at three levels in his plays. Healthy individuals mean a healthy family. Healthy families, in turn, mean a healthy society. Understanding this truth, Albee has tried, in the first level, to impart a “teaching emotion” to individuals in order to change their lives and also their perception the life. The second
chapter of this dissertation has dealt with Albee's concern for such individuals.

The second chapter begins with an analysis of the precarious life and unfortunate death of Jerry. The play, an intensely harrowing expression of estrangement in American society, has actually launched Albee's meteoric rise to fame. It is about the inability of a permanent transient who attempts to make a meaningful contact with a fellow human being. It presents a fatal confrontation between the middle-class America and its outcasts. Jerry is presented by Albee as an emotionally disturbed man in his late thirties. He is a social outcast. In an apparently restless desperation, he tries to find someone whom he can make a contact with. Finding Peter in the Central park, he talks in a rambling yet intelligent way about the miseries of his life. His story about his life reveals his inability to relate to others, including the fellow residents of his rooming house on the upper West Side. In a final and suicidal attempt to give his life some meaning, Jerry impales
himself on a knife held by Peter, the paragon of the normal. With his death, Jerry at once makes contact with another human, challenging the bourgeois sense of social and moral order.

Albee’s creative masterpieces are both subtle and complex, and, as it has already been stated in the previous chapter, they reflect the tension between the American social realism and the Theatre of the Absurd. The action and dialogue of *The Zoo Story* are dislocated, arbitrary, and absurd up to the moment of Jerry’s death. Jerry explains to Peter the farce and the agony of human isolation. He says he has gone to the zoo only to find out how people can co-exist in this difficult world. What he discovers is that the entire human condition is a zoo story of people (and animals) forever separated by bars. From his experience with the dog, which symbolizes the vicious aspects of society, Jerry learnt “the teaching emotion,” a combination of kindness and cruelty that forms, for him at least, life itself.

Albee has intentionally used the story of Jerry to engage his audience in harsh social criticism as
he attacks the American way of life. The stupidity and bias of the privileged elite forces the society’s outcasts to live in a savage society. Jerry’s life can be seen as a struggle for existence in the jungle of the city against the forces that threaten his highly individualistic, nonconformist character, as well as his protest against the consequent isolation with which a conformist society punishes him for daring to assert such individualism. The confrontation with Peter as a representative of that society becomes a kind of crisis or climax to his entire life. The park bench is the arena for the conflict of values and the attack on the conformist, middle-class emptiness, and complacency of Peter’s life. Jerry feels compelled and challenged to combat the isolation in his life and to make contact with Peter in the only way possible.

*The Zoo Story* is considered to be a modern morality play with the themes of human isolation and salvation through sacrifice. Albee employs traditional Christian symbols that serve as an expanded allusion to Christ’s sacrifice. However,
Jerry’s death can be seen as a deliberate act of protest against the physical and psychological violence of the city; the injustice and indifference of the system; the empty, conformist and materialistic American middle-class values; the feeling of life being lived in a void; and the isolation of humanity. The play suggests an uncomfortable conclusion, that the price of survival under these conditions may be the murder of a fellow human being. For Jerry, all humans are divided into two classes: vegetable and animal. The former comprises those who merely subsist, and the latter those who are willing to fight and kill, as animals do, for survival. At the end of the play, the “teaching emotion” plays itself out in full dramatic focus. Peter leaves his vegetable existence and becomes an animal. Through the courageous and noble act that costs him his life, Jerry momentarily connects with Peter, who now has the possibility to live authentically for the first time and become an apostle who will carry the message of humans’ caged animality and isolation in the contemporary world.
If Jerry is a victim of the society, so is Peter. He is a victim of his middle class values. He is also alone but his loneliness is self-inflicted. Albee, through Jerry, offers him freedom from his self-imposed isolation. In an interview Albee expresses his belief that Peter, after the suicide-murder in the park on the fateful Sunday evening, will not remain the same person again. The teaching emotion will have surely purged the harmless yet harmful attitude of Peter.

The next character, whose depiction draws attention towards the genuine humanitarian concerns of Albee, and who comes second in the list of individuals analysed, is the eighty-six year old Grandma. She is one of the central characters is two of Albee’s plays namely The Sandbox and The American Dream. The modern life becomes so mechanical and self-centred that even certain basic humane aspects have completely lost their meaning. Grandma is also a victim of the evil intent of the society. Grandma is old. She has lived her life and in the process has managed by bring up her only daughter, Mommy who
gets married to a rich man named, Daddy. Being too old, Grandma deserves a peaceful final leg of her journey. Mommy owes her life to Grandma and by any means it is her responsibility to take proper care of her aged mother. But the picture that Albee gives on stage in The Sandbox is quite disturbing. The old lady who deserves a better treatment from her daughter is on the verge of being deserted by her own daughter. She becomes a mere appendage, an adjunct in the life of Mommy who wants to be free from all the troubles or all the sources of troubles. Grandma, being the main source of Mommy’s discomfort, is forcefully taken to the beach where the middle-aged couple plan to dispose of the “unnecessary extra” in the family. They drag and dump her in a sandbox and wait the whole night for her to die.

Grandma is clearly unhappy. She is old. She cannot do anything on her own. She has to depend on Mommy and Daddy for all her needs. She, like all the elderly people, expects her daughter to be kind and helpful to her. But Mommy, instead of reciprocating all the good things done to her
by Grandma, treats her badly. Now, finding herself dumped in a box, she slowly rights herself to a sitting position and cries like a baby. *The Sandbox* has obviously demolished the traditional belief of the necessary love between parents and children. It has also destroyed the long nourished and profound respect for the institution called family. The play is yet another shocker from Albee. This time, he stresses the importance of elderly care. Old people deserve our love and respect and their dignity is our responsibility. This is what Albee tries to put across through this beach episode.

Though Grandma finds no such predicament of being dumped in a sandbox on the sands of a beach in *The American Dream*, she is frequently being teased by Mommy with words about the “van people.” Of course, Albee’s concern for the aged is further developed in *The American Dream*, the longer version of the earlier play *The Sandbox*. The play is structured into three major sections and eleven groupings of the five characters. The first
section deals with the family unit itself—Mommy, Daddy, and Grandma—and the decision of whether Grandma should be put into a nursing home. The second section involves the introduction of Mrs. Barker, a social acquaintance of Mommy. The final part of the play begins with the arrival of the Young Man and Grandma’s attempt to keep from being institutionalized. The play provides a clearer account of the problems of the old age through the character of Grandma.

People like Grandma deserve a better treatment. The aged are not like nails to be cut when they grow longer. They are not like old clothes to be thrown away when they fade and are torn out. They are human beings, the very flesh and blood. They should be understood properly and adjusted with accordingly. Albee puts up a genuine fight for the sake of the elderly people. The two plays, The American Dream and its miniature version, The Sandbox, truly play a crucial role in effectively conveying the concerns of Albee for the aged persons of his society.
While Jerry is a victim of isolation and Grandma of the callous attitude of the middle-aged establishment, Bessie Smith is a symbol of the disadvantaged blacks in America. Bessie is a popular Negro singer whose death is the result of the savage racial discrimination. The play *The Death of Bessie Smith* is based on the events that led to the sad demise of the legendary blues singer who died after an automobile accident in 1937 because a white hospital in Memphis reportedly refused to admit her. This one-act is very much a drama about racial bigotry. It attacks social rituals, the illusions of power, and a callous society that robs the individual of dignity, identity, and life. The evils of racial discrimination and the evils of drinking are the two pertinent themes of American theatre. Edward Albee has deftly synthesised both these themes in this play. The racial discrimination is one thing that should be done away with. The colour of the skin should not be deciding factor. The plea for tolerance was loud enough, and this Albee play
transformed the blue singer into a great symbol of disadvantaged black and sacrifice.

It is not only racism but also alcoholism that has killed Bessie. Alcoholism is another illusion that people resort to escape the hostile realities. Even, Jack, who is homeless and hopeless, addicts himself to bottles. As it has been already mentioned, the playwright has cleverly introduced the age old theme of the evils of drinking alongside the age old theme of the evils of racism. The Nurses are clearly responsible for the death of Bessie. At the same time, both Jack and Bessie are equally responsible for the unfortunate accident. They could have averted the accident, had they not been quite drunk at the time of travelling. The accident that has killed her is clearly the result of carelessness on the part of Jack and also Bessie. In his drunkenness, Jack has no idea of his driving speed. Both have been riding along...laughing and the singer has heedlessly allowed her arm to hang out the window. Bessie’s
bloody, violent death has certainly been caused by her alcoholism.

Besides the individuals portrayed in his early one-act plays. Martha, in his first full length drama Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, is the most striking victim of the affluent American society. She is introduced as a loud-mouthed, hard-drinking, ill-tempered wife of George. This lady, who is in her mid-fifties, is the only daughter of the President of the New Carthage College. If Jerry is driven to death by a deep-rooted angst and desperation, the same can be said to have driven Martha to the extent of committing adultery. Her endless verbal quarrels with her husband whom she finds to be a total failure on all fronts are nothing but an expression of her sense of disappointments. She is clearly a product of the modern consumerist society. Totally conditioned by the by the trends of her time, she has great expectations of her husband. She wants him to succeed her father as the next president of the college. Poor George simply
fumbles and miserably fails to rise, even close to her expectations. George’s failure is Martha’s frustration. And, the couple’s inability to beget an off-spring rubs salt to their already sore relationship.

Albee’s early plays express discontent with the optimism and conformity of the 1950s with the materialist ideals that prospered in America during the economic boom following World War II. This play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is yet another play from the Albee canon to destroy the illusion that shields the people from the discontent caused by the optimism of the all pervasive American dream. Martha’s disillusionment with life finds powerful expression in the way she behaves in general. She is loud, aggressive, and vulgar, secure that her father’s position at the college will insulate her from censure. Martha and George’s marriage revolves around a series of games, none more central than the myth that they have a teenage son, a fiction that Martha in some strange ways has convinced herself to believe despite the fact that they cannot have
children. When Martha’s continuous attacks on George’s professional status and masculinity prove too much for him to bear, he retaliates by revealing before their guests Nick and Honey that his and Martha’s son is “dead,” effectively shattering Martha’s carefully maintained fantasy world and forcing both him and Martha to face the future without the comfort of fantasy and game-playing. By shattering the big ‘Woolf’ from their life, Albee creates an opportunity for them to rebuild, rather restructure their life. The lesson that the playwright wants to communicate is the necessity of facing the reality, however hostile it may be, by destroying the illusions, however comfortable they may be.

Albee’s shattering plays fill the minds of all his viewers and readers with a cataclysmic gallery of ‘pestilence-stricken multitudes’. It is not Albee’s purpose to project the absurdist’s sense of a cosmic loss. His individuals are shown to have suffered as a result some unjust social (Jerry, Peter, Grandma, Martha, George, Himself) or political (Bessie Smith)
or religious (Julian) strictures. Albee’s characters do not convey any sense of inescapable pessimism. They are made to transform themselves into better human beings. The optimism that catches his leaves, Albee hopes, may also spread to his audience.

The next level of Albee’s concerns is towards the most important unit of the social structure. The name of the social unit is called the family. The family image that Albee has been reflecting since his formative years as playwright is quite disquieting. Critics have been busy tracing down elements of Albee’s personal life in the depiction of families in his plays. But, Albee’s chief concerns are not simply the expression of what he has lost in his personal life. Instead, he is very much concerned with the crumbling tumble of the familial structures of his time. Albee is aware of the meaning and importance of the nuclear family. He was orphaned by his biological parents. Though adopted by a rich family, he was only a poor victim of the richness. His longing for an ideal nuclear family is completely in contrast with what he has personally experienced.
or what the others in his affluent American society have experienced.

The success myth and the great American dream have more negative impacts on the lives of the Americans. The mad craving for success exerted enormous pressure on the average Americans who, unable to cope with the ever-increasing demands of the society, become mere abject abstractions. Healthy human bond becomes a thing of the past, resulting in alienated individuals. Human relationships, even within the family, have received damaging cracks, leading to misunderstandings in marital life. And, the American concept of nuclear family, which, according to dictionaries, is a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not, stands denuded of joy and unity. Edward Albee has been, right from his Off-Broadway adventures, preoccupied with the familial frictions in his affluent American society.

The role patterns of the members of a traditional family are well defined. The father is
usually the bread-winner while the mother takes care of the more important field of loving and caring.

Morality and marital allegiance is the very foundation of the family structure. All these finer aspects, that have traditionally been binding families together, lose their shine to leave the home drab and disintegrated. The collapse of traditional values results in a strained relationship within the members of the family. Albee’s plays have ably captured the badly ruptured homes to leave his audience stranded in thoughts of the good old raptures of marital harmony.

Albee’s prime concern in the second level is the fast eroding virtue of allegiance in marriage. Jerry’s mother has deserted her husband and son and embarked on an adulterous turn to the southern states. The highly voluptuous Martha has seduced and moved in with Nick, that too in the presence of her husband George. In fact, she has been in the habit of seeking sexual adventures outside the marriage. It is almost habitual for her. Nick too comes out openly about his plan to sleep with the any
influential wife of the town in order to realise his dream of succeeding in life. Claire makes advances to Tobias in *A Delicate Balance*. The Wife, in *All Over*, while death-waiting, confesses her affair with [her Husband‘s] Best Friend. The dying man too was not faithful to his wife. He has an extramarital affair with another woman. The Mistress, who is an intruder in the life of Wife, recalls her past. It has been twenty long years since she comes to the dying man. She also confesses that in addition to this affair, she has had two former husbands, and when an adolescent, an initiating sexual fling with a boy.

And the old woman, A, *Three Tall Woman*, too, remembers her infidelity. The old lady, named in the play as A, reflects on her life with a mixture of shame, pleasure, regret, and satisfaction. She recalls the fun of her childhood and her marriage, when she had an overwhelming optimism for her future. Yet she bitterly recalls the negative events that resulted in regret: her husband‘s extramarital affairs, the death of her husband, and the
estrangement of her gay son. A continues to confess that she has been unfaithful to her husband, committing adultery with the groom in the stable. She says her affair began mostly in self-pity and revenge for her husband’s infidelity. Her husband has money hence has many extra-marital affairs. This angers her resulting in revenge.

The affinity between husband and wife is of paramount importance for a healthy familial bond. In almost all the families that Albee has portrayed in his plays have suffered as a result of extramarital affairs. Morality has no place in the lives of modern man. Having an affair with a man or woman outside the marriage becomes a normal activity of late. But, Albee has gone many steps ahead when his character Martin, in The Goat, reveals that he has an affair with a woman other than his wife. What is actually shocking in his confession is that the woman in his case happens to be a goat.

Not only marital life, even the very concept of marriage itself is treated as a commercial contract. Money is certainly behind many marriages in Albee’s
society. Mommy marries Daddy for he is rich. Nick marries Honey for all her money. Even George has a motive behind his connubial life. The Mistress, A, the Nurse – all these characters see marriage with that jaundiced eyes. Marriage is perceived as a treaty that guarantees a secure future. Infidelity and the consumerist attitude towards marriage bring in frictions. To tide over the troubles, the families plunge deep into illusions. This one area is the main concern of the playwright. Illusions cannot give anyone an ever-lasting solution to our problematic existence. Albee pictures not only the rift in the family, but also leaves his characters with life-affirming solutions. Preferring illusion to reality has become a way of life. When the excruciating realities bite hard, man takes shelter under the carpet comforts of illusion. Albee dismantles this myth of illusion to offer a solution to the two couples to return to reality to reorganize their life.

When the normal family structure is broken, it destroys the very fabric of the society. “It [family]
seems to be the basic structure," Albee said in an interview he gave to Jane Holt in 1985, “not only in humans, but in the animal kingdom as well...” (Conversations with Edward Albee, 192). Albee’s societal concerns form the final level of his humanitarian concerns. Albee has effectively used his plays to offend his audience in order to offer them a life-giving experience. In another interview, this living legend professes to Patricia De La Fuente that “Art is not pacification. It is disturbance.” (Ibid., p.xiii). He believes that the theatre must disturb in order to reform society.

His societal concerns have already been implicitly expressed in the form of his concerns about the withered leaves and the denuded trees. Albee’s picture of his complacent society can well be described as a Sterile Garden where most of the trees stand denuded of peace and happiness because the leaves are fallen and are swept away by the current of misplaced ideals and ambitions. Albee is highly critical of the “imposed values” (Ibid., p.192) on the lives of his fellow Americans.
Albee is often seen as a morbid social critic. He is not at all happy with his affluent American society of the 1950s and 1960s. With materialism gaining a firm grip on the lives of most of the population, especially the middle-class population, the traditional values start losing its rooting in the society. The idea that the very face of America is fast changing and the very land is fast turning out to be the most promising paradise on earth, the land of gold, inundates the social life across the entire country.

The loss of humane aspects that have been carried away by the current of emerging dreams and desires finds a permanent place in the scheme of things of this most important playwright of the nation. American dream proves to be a major spark that has rapidly engulfed the entire nation, flaring up a burning desire in everyone to succeed in life. The insidious dream has unleashed a reign of hopes mostly promising success and prosperity to every citizen of the land. The promise proves to be too heavy an undertaking for the nation to realize. The
failure to accomplish the cherished goals results in
disappointments, leading to delirious deeds. Albee
tries to hold a faithful mirror to reflect only the
painful reality afflicting the lives of the people of
contemporary America.

The American society, like most of the societies
around the world, is infected with many viruses.
This playwright, whose main aim is to shock in order
to shake people of their numbness, has mostly used
his plays as anti-virus to scan and cleanse the
system. The loss of love and compassion, the cant
and complacency, the breakdown in communication, the
rift in human relationships, the racial
discriminations, the preference of artificial to real
values, the insidious inclination towards illusion,
the corroding moral and religious codes, corruption
in the Campus and the Church, the consumerist bent,
the familial frictions, gay affairs and bestiality
are the bugs afflicting an aspiring nation.

Right from his *The Zoo Story* to his *The Goat,*
the society that he has presented on stage, has, in
one way or the other, shocked the theatre-goers. The
dingy rooming house that Jerry talks about provides a painful picture. Man is reduced to the level of animals. In another society of Albee, a middle-aged daughter (Mommy) dumps her aged mother (Grandma) in sandbox on a beach and wait, along with her husband (Daddy), for the old lady to die. In the Suburb of New Carthage a tainted campus is filled with the echoes of a harangue.

The very name Carthage conveys what Albee wants to convey through this play about the failures of George, the Associate Professor of History. The Ancient Carthage is a place is a place mentioned and condemned by St. Augustine. Augustine states: “At Carthage, there reigns among scholars a most disgraceful and unruly license” (Augustine, 5.8.14). The words of Augustine are true of Albee’s New Carthage. The lives of the University teachers are certainly most disgraceful and unruly. Stooping to any level is not the mark of teachers and the teaching profession. Nick, the new Biology teacher is willing to “plough a few pertinent wives” in indeed unruly. The institutions and the religion are
used as means to amass wealth. Martha’s father, who is the President of the College and Honey’s father, a god-man, amassed wealth by corrupt practices. At Memphis, a precious life is precariously lost because of the inhuman attitude of the white Nurses.

The 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 are evidenced 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* instils 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. A dangerous participation is better than no participation. This is the message that this highly controversial yet highly compassionate playwright of contemporary America.

The world of Albee is indeed a treasure house of research possibilities. His plays offer a lot of avenues to the research scholars to tread on. A truly vast and potential field, Albee theatre can be explored to any extent. Researches on his plays have
already been carried out with reference to his
absurdist shades, his gloomy thematic preoccupations,
and his explosive yet original language. Scholars
have also worked on the various human relationships
as depicted in his plays, also on his endless
experimentations and also on the autobiographical
elements embedded in his works. However, there are
areas in Albee that are yet to be examined
thoroughly. For example, the most obvious one, no
threadbare analysis on his dramatic vision is yet to
be undertaken, at least in India. Albee is, perhaps,
the first playwright to write on bestiality on stage.
The gay affairs and bestiality is another area that
can be probed in depth. The emasculation of male
characters and its impact on the society is yet to be
dealt with in detail. These are all some of the
research possibilities in the realm of Albee Theatre.
Besides, the fact that he is still active as a writer
adds endless possibilities to research aspirations

To conclude, it can be stated the humanitarian
concerns enshrined in the theatrical endeavours of
Edward Albee present him as a true humanist. He is
not simply a traditional humanist but a critical humanist. He is critical in his exposure of the absurdities of modern life. He is a humanist in his affirmative vision of the possibilities of life.