CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

By way of summary and conclusion it may be said that Edward Albee belongs to the practitioners of absurd drama. His plays The Zoo Story, The American Dream and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf dramatize themes which were taken up by Samuel Beckett, Adamov, Jean Genet and Ionesco. The contribution of the absurd dramatist including Edward Albee consists in their giving a form to the complex nature of life in Western societies. If others represented the disillusionments and disappointments of their respective societies Albee represented aspects of life in American Society.

Of all the literary art forms drama is the most popular one combining action, character, plot, music, dance, spectacle and poetry. From Sophoclean tragedy to Shakespearean tragedy, from Euripides to Oscar Wilde drama more or less conformed to a pattern. It had a design and a structure. It had people who were representatives of their societies. Although there had been variations of tragedy and comedy by and large the norms were kept up. But it is in the twentieth century that several radical changes have come...
about in the conception and execution of drama. It all means each age needed its own definition of man and its own definition of art. It is against this fact of history that absurd drama needs to be considered and evaluated.

Thanks to explosion of knowledge, to a host of philosophies which defined the human self comprising his mind, spirit and consciousness man needed to be fitted into the definitions offered by the thinkers. Hence the experiments in theme, character and action. Though the consequences are not welcome for the readers or the audiences, the plays nevertheless stand out as remarkable and sensitive registers reflecting the moods and motivations of the people. In a way the absurd plays have an affective value, in the Shakespearean phrase, They 'catch the conscience' of the reader or the audience. The audiences are startled by the truths presented about themselves on the stage.

Albee's The Zoo Story has a simple structure and just two characters. Though the scene and the characters of undistinguished they enact the trials and tribulations of most modern men. By using the images of non-reason Albee attacks the American way of life. Isolation, loneliness, humiliation, dissatisfaction, depression and lovelessness are shown to be bars separating man from man and man from the natural world. The play takes up social problems and philosophical subjects
handled by Ionesco, Beckett and Jean Genet. The breakdown of communication and the nursing of illusions also aligns this plays with those of other absurd dramatists. The relationship between absurd and suicide is subtly suggested.

Like *The Zoo Story*, *The American Dream* belongs to *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Critic after critic has aligned this play to Ionesco because both considered devaluation of language as an index of vacuity of the social life. Just as Ionesco satirized the meaningless civilities exchanged by the Smiths and Martins in his *The Bald Prima Donna*, Albee ridicules the social intercourse in *The American Dream*. Although adverse criticism dismissed it as nihilistic and immoral, it must be admitted that the play transcends the personal and private and deals with the anguish of all. Moreover it is a play which has like all plays good comedy, the Grandma is both comic and tragic figure and will appeal to the imaginations of the audience.

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* sets at rests the whispering campaign against Albee and confirms his accomplishment as a playwright. As in *The Zoo Story* and *The American Dream* the playwright embodies the theme of incommunicability which is dramatized in the two pairs of husband and wife -- Marthe and George and Honey and Nick. The play is more
comprehensive than its predecessors because it accommodates many themes — marital relationships, sterility, impotence and the consequent disillusionment. In the entire play lasting about three hours nothing really happens excepting mutual betrayal and accusation. This is a very fascinating play which earned its recognition by centering on timeless issues and ideas.

Albee therefore cannot be credited with the inauguration of a new genre in drama but with strengthening it by his plays. His work has a classic quality which will ensure his immortality.