Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace, another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in fields of night.¹

Man has been civilizing himself since his evolution. His aim has been to achieve the perfection of life. But it has resulted in a perverse perfection because of the technological influence. Toynbee said that man has climbed to the highest peak of civilization and therefore he either must climb down slowly or fall down to ruin. In a world beset by the scientific and technological advancement many writers and prophets agree upon marching towards the goal of universal brotherhood by various routes according to the problems that have touched their hearts. For instance, Wilfred Owen bases his 'universal brotherhood' upon the pedestal of warfare, but Albee presents his theme of human relationships on the pedestal of social welfare. To quote C.W.E. Bigsy,
“To Edward Albee ... modern society has detached itself from the fundamentals and has created a new system of values by which the pursuit of material wealth and technological efficiency has come to replace basic human needs."² By focusing attention on the American middle class family, this chapter examines the human relationship in the family unit-between husband and wife, parent and children, and among siblings-and the debasement of values and estrangement of individuals both in family and in society.

The fundamental unit of the human community and the universal humanizing unit of all societies is the family. "A family" as defined by Ernest W. Burgers, is "a group of two or more persons, joined by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, which constitute a single household, who interact with each other in their respective familiar roles, and which creates and maintains a common culture."³ It is indeed, the most remarkable institution wherein its members act according to the culturally prescribed roles. It is in the family, many of the most important values are learnt. The family not only transmits values, but it also symbolizes some of the distinct 'human' values: tenderness, love, concern and loyalty. The varied human relationships in the family; family struggles and disappointments, leading to social issues have been the concern of the renowned playwrights of the world.

Family, despite its disintegration in the modern age persists because of the sense of security it provides. Family life, starting from the colonial days, up to the present has been "the preferred mode of living for adults of all ages in the United States."⁴ In the colonial American families, among puritans, marriage was considered a blessing. Individuals were able to find solace and comfort in their families. The family of the latter half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is markedly unstable, characterized by high divorce rate,
lower birth rate and a smaller family size. In the modern family, which emerged as an after effect of urbanization and industrialization, emphasis was laid on social and economic values. Marital relationship was de-emphasized and money usurped the place of love.

Family considered the source of safety and security changed into a source of struggles. Absence of love and affection, lack of understanding and communication has turned most of the families into war zones. Albee exposes the American scene at the roots of the family unit. According to Albee the family is said to be breaking down and is in need of an immediate repair. Anne Paolucci comes quite close to the truth with the general assessment of Albee’s works when she says “He goes beyond social commentary to the disease of contemporary life.”5 Albee more than anyone else, had the advantage of having lived through the times when the limits between old and new, known and unknown, normal and abnormal were constantly being breached. He felt gratifying to “write about imbalance within many relationships” for he has always believed that it is “imbalance, discontent” which embraces “all Drama.”6 Anita M. Stenz, in her book-length study, points out rather unambiguously that “his main areas of inquiry are failure in human relationships in whatever combinations they occur.”7

In the first full length play Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Albee portrays what American family really looks like. Albee’s sharpest thrusts are aimed at the materialism, opportunism and cannibalism built into the institution of marriage. He invents the American drama of an ideal family life in order to project the reality; the real state of the American family which represents the condition of the modern society. The names of George and Martha remind one of George and Martha Washington suggesting that even the father of America had no children
of his own. The barrenness of George and Martha symbolizes the barrenness of American society.

The childless couple under the strong effect of alcohol lay bare the emptiness of their marital lives. Albee has developed the theme of sterility in *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Childlessness is used as a symbol of emotional sterility as in Federico García Lorca's *Yerma.* George and Martha, who like Daddy and Mommy in *The American Dream,* feign in front of others that they are satisfied with their marriage, are aware of the failure of their marriage, which is incomplete without a child. Being discontented with "the mire of the vile, crushing marriage" (P. 133) as Martha calls their marriage, they struggle against the anguish throughout their life. Both of them have accepted their struggle as an endless war. While George is "devastatingly invective" Martha is "swinishly effective" (P.4) Despite the fact that their married life is a long, sad game, they have the unique quality of standing together for ever continuing their love-hate relationship.

In their drunken orgy, George and Martha destroy each other in brilliant dialogues of disgust and malice. They exchange verbal punches feeding on their own weakness. Words like "Braying", "Cock-spaniel", "Hyena", "Satanic-Bitch", "monster", "a spoiled self-indulgent, willful, dirty-minded, liquor-ridden ..." (P.94) for Martha and a "simp", a "blank", a "cipher", a "sour-puss", "muck-mouth", "paunchy", "bastard", "swampy", "floozie", and "son-of-a-bitch" for George are used quite often. They attack each other with great skill and cruelty because they are afraid to face the emptiness of their lives. These epithets are a clear evidence of the opinion they have for each other. Their imaginary son fills a vacuum in their lives, but he is less a son who brings peace and comfort and more of a weapon used to attack each other for their inadequacies. The relationship between George and Martha does not
improve much with their imaginary son. Both narrate the reasons for
the need to invent the son and the purpose to which they interpret their
fiction.

Albee has exploited the Elizabethan theme of war between the
sexes. George and Martha engage in a war of sexes. Sharpening their
claws they tear “through the skin, all three layers, through the muscle …
and get down to the bone,” (pp124-125) George and Martha have tried
to forget the haunting emptiness of their marriage by playing together
the game of “bringing up the son” for twenty one years. The domestic
warfare over shadows any hints of affection and the marriage seems to
be turning from hatred to final dissolution. George by indulging in a
bloodless homicide in order to subdue Martha’s pride, kills the child of
fantasy in the presence of their guests, who watch them bewildered. He
thus brings the secret game played for twenty—one long years to an
end.

Realizing the sterility in the relationship of the older couple, Nick
and Honey are forced to confess their own emptiness. Nick admits, “I
wouldn’t say there was any—particular passion between us; even at the
beginning …of our marriage, I mean”. (P.63) His marriage is not
founded on real love and affection but on money and deception. He
confesses that he married Honey because he believed her to be
pregnant, whereas Honey, who tricked Nick into marriage by her
‘hysterical pregnancy’, secretly avoids conceiving. She is frightened by
the idea of child bearing:

“No ... I don’t want any ... Please” (P. 105)

The family becomes a pretense which the couples sustain by
lying to themselves. They, as the couple Tobias and Agnes in A
Delicate Balance do, remain within the family unit not because they are bound by mutual love and affection but because (according to Albee) "the family is the way we have devised to avoid facing the truth about our own selfish nurtures. We are alone, isolated, unable to give love but screaming to be loved."9

C.W.E Bigsby says that even love is counted by human beings in terms of material gains. "Therefore human relationships should exist outside the cash nexus"10 and the society should be held together by freely acknowledged emotional and moral bonds. This is the main concern of Albee's plays. He portrays in them the pathos arising out of the loss of love in personal relationships. For example, George and Martha in Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf? "go round the mulberry bush" for twenty-one years. They are shown at the end as left only 'with one another', with relationship. They acknowledge the responsibility which they had previously evaded; where once they had used the imaginary child as a means to accuse one another; they now accept their joint failure: "We couldn't" (have illusions anymore). As Albee himself has acknowledged there is a 'hint of communion in this'. (P. 138)

George and Martha in Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf? destroy their symbolic family to know one another truly, but in A Delicate Balance the characters continue to use the family arrangement as a pretence to live. This play A Delicate Balance won the Pulitzer prize for Albee in 1967 and is about the 'delicate balance' which Tobias and Agnes try to maintain. In this play Albee investigates how a basic social structure, the family, is disoriented at its source. C.W.E. Bigsby observes "The play is offered both as an examination of the failure of individual commitment ... and as an account of the collapse of personal and social meaning which simply compounds a metaphysical
... absurdity." The individual's inauthentic response towards his own life has given rise to an institutionalized monotony: "becoming a stranger in ... the world ... quite uninvolved". (P.3)

In *A Delicate Balance* a single family is taken for dissection. The family 'an icon of the American system' has adopted not mutual understanding and mutual dedication but mutual fear and expectation. Love, affection, and friendship are all misunderstood and misrepresented. Only the long association and the demands of the society make them live together, while everybody is a separate island by himself. Everyone has simply compromised in the battered George's style as in *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? "Accommodation, malleability, adjustment ... those do seem to be the order of things." This inhibits any real relationship among the members as well as towards others and everyone is emotionally estranged in their attempt to hold on and to maintain the family's shape. Family structure is there, but its harmony is lost. What Albee implies here is that the very aim of integration in the family system results in disintegration.

The setting in *A Delicate Balance* is the living room of a well appointed sub-urban house of the present day America. It is a comfortable house but not a home. The family consists of six characters whose lives are hanging in a delicate balance. Tobias is the head of the family. Though he and his wife, Agnes have evolved a working relationship, they are estranged. His sister-in-law, Claire, is an alcoholic, who finds alcohol an amiable substitute for her happiness. Their only daughter, Julia "a quadruple amputee"(P.66) and their best friends, frightened and scared; Harry and Edna, arrive one after another, seeking refuge and comfort; to a house which is already hanging precariously. Each member is forced to introspect and face his or her true image in the mirror of life.
Tobias and Agnes have been living a mechanical existence, performing to their best what ever duties are required of them for the smooth running of the house. They lead a hollow marital life, a life confined to their own shells, showing no initiative for contacting the other. Outwardly they talk amiably, calling each other sweet names and protesting what they would do without the other. There is patience and calmness on the exterior, but there is a turmoil within, which they are afraid to reveal. There is a constant tussle going on between the two sisters especially on the subject of Claire’s heavy drinking which results in her misbehavior. Leading a life does not mean living the life, but protecting the titular balance. Each one seeks only self protection and isolation in a house which is devoid of love.

Albee in *A Delicate Balance* exposes the bleak realities of human relationships, calls attention to the failure of love and the great need for love in families. Tobias and Agnes are victims of despair of their own creation. Their house is not a home but a place where two strangers live. Tobias experiences the loss of their son at a very early age and later on he is disappointed in his love for his cat. These disappointments in love have driven him to refuse any emotional commitment and he severed all physical intimacies from Agnes, whereas Agnes suspects that her sister Claire would have been Tobias’ mistress. She is further distressed and disappointed by Tobias’ unwillingness for having another child. Tormented by her husband’s infidelity and his refusal to commit himself both sexually and emotionally, Agnes speculates of becoming schizophrenic. Like her husband she too estranges herself from her family. Tobias has built his family not on love and affection but on alienation. The family has become the inescapable trap in which the husband and wife are caught. The failure to bridge the gap between them brings unhappiness in the
family not only for both of them, but also has a grave consequence on the emotional growth of their daughter Julia.

Albee projects another angle of their family’s disharmony by showing all marriages of Julia as failures. The child, who expected her parent’s compassion and sympathy, is left disillusioned, because failures in her life are due to lack of understanding and communication between herself and her parents. Even at the age of thirty-six she is childish, seeking comfort from her parents, as if she is a fifteen year old girl. The home coming of their daughter Julia, once in three years after her unsuccessful marriages, reflects her parents ‘unhappy married life’; wherein they never communicated with each other and were responsible for theirs daughter’s precarious condition.

Eric Fromn has suggested that for many, marriage is an attempt to counter a feeling of isolation. He argues that for such people, it is “the main emphasis on finding a refuge from an otherwise unbearable sense of aloneness;” and when this fails, as it does many times for Julia, “such people continue to remain children, to hope for father or mother to come to their help when help is needed.” This is the reason why Julia runs to the security of her home, whenever there is a disagreement between her spouse and herself. Julia, being callow, is frightened by the external world; she seeks comfort at least in her own room. Deprived of her room, “a special room with a night light or the door ajar so you can look down the hall from the bed and see that Mommy’s door is open” (P.92) she becomes hysterical.

The loveless, tiresome relationship of the parents prevents their only child from growing. The ‘delicate balance’ where all are placed together, bound not by bonds of love but by blood; could never inspire
the child to develop and meet the demands of the world without disillusionment.

Albee's *A Delicate Balance* also portrays the sibling rivalry between the two sisters. The relationship between the sisters is marred by the disgust each displays for the other. A basic jealousy marks their relationship. Agnes' suspicion that Claire could have been Tobias' mistress aggravates the enmity between them. She fears her sister to be a threat to her relationship with Tobias, and also a source of danger to the family balance. Claire who loves Tobias is jealous of her sister who is the "ruler of the roost ... and licensed wife"; (P. 149) and Agnes feels that "the one thing sharper than a serpent's tooth is a sister's ingratitude." (P.6) Despite Claire's behavior, Agnes allows her to stay with her. It is not love, but Agnes' sympathy and patience, which allow her to tolerate Claire in her household.

Agnes by adjusting herself to all situations is able to maintain a permanent relationship with her sister. Even behind the threatening, there is the underlying care for her sister, whereas Claire, who imposes herself on others, is unable to establish any constant relationship even with her sister. She reduced her life to the world of language where she can pass sharp and racy comments about everybody. As a result she simply desires continued sanctuary from a world in which she has been crazily buffeted about.

Tobias being placed at the centre of the circle formed by family and friends, each one appealing to him for something or the other finds himself inadequate to satiate their needs; especially to Harry and Edna who have come for 'succor' and comfort'. They create more chaos in their world. Stenz explains, "Refugees from their own loneliness and loss, they come looking for the warmth and the sense of belonging
which they have failed to create between themselves in their marriage." Tobias shouts and tries to tell "HARRY AND EDNA ARE OUR FRIENDS". "They are intruders" Agnes snaps back, explaining "They have brought the plague with them" and she feels that if they are not careful they may be affected "It's not Edna and Harry who have come to us -our friends - it is a disease". (P. 151) With a shattering realization Tobias asks, "... if that's all Harry and Edna mean to us, then ... then what have we meant? Anything? When we touch, when we promise, and say ... yes, or please ... with ourselves? ... have we meant, yes, but only if ... if there's any condition. Agnes! Then it's ... all been empty". (pp 151 -152) He could not digest that harsh truth.

Fortunately for him, Harry serves as a mirror when he confesses that if Tobias and Agnes had come to live with them, reversing the present situation; he would not take them in; they would not have the "rights", so as to impose and test their love in the name of friendship. Tobias gradually feels his way towards an understanding both of the fact of his own isolation and of the real nature of his relationship towards his friends. He finally admits that he does not love them and confesses that they are a threat to his peace of mind;

I DON'T WANT YOU HERE!
...
YOU BRING YOUR TERROR AND COME IN HERE AND YOU LIVE WITH US!
YOU BRING YOUR PLAGUE!
YOU STAY WITH US!
I DON'T WANT YOU HERE
I DON'T LOVE YOU
BUT BY GOD ... YOU STAY!
...
Stay. Please? Stay? (pp 161 - 162)

During this emotional crisis they undergo, Harry and Edna come close to each other and are re-acquainted. They can communicate easily with each other without feeling afraid or lonely any more.
The social and moral responsibility of an individual in society has been to preserve friendship. If friendship is to be true and lasting, it requires that "we must be helpful when we can, my dear that is the ... responsibility the double demand of friendship ... is it not?" (P. 112) Albee has created an awareness regarding the ultimate responsibility of a human being, to extend love not merely to his own kinsmen and friends, but the entire humanity as well; they believe that mankind must have faith in its own humanity and love. As acknowledged by Albee, in A Delicate Balance, "we’re not a communal nation ... giving, but not sharing, outgoing, but not friendly" (P.82) and what is lost in the contemporary society is love for humanity.

Albee has said that A Delicate Balance is essentially concerned with people who ‘have not made the distinction between self and society and who have to suffer for not making the distinction’. They have discovered he insists, ‘that after a certain point they have become paralyzed and can’t change when they want to’.

Edward Albee depicts the family in its wider social setting, establishing a role for the child and completes his dramatization of the family and friends similar to that of Albee’s life. Albee exploits the relationship within the family:

To mirror the dilemma of a society, which lacks the means to build a true community, the family itself is not made a scapegoat and is not the only source of breakdown the play represents. The family is impoverished in the play; it is because Albee is exploring the bareness of a community built on a false awareness of rights. In this play the right to belong is a demand, in the way that there is a primitive desire to give affection, to create a community out of love.
Edward Albee declared in 1967 that he was working on two short plays "Life" and "Death". The later, known as All Over, was performed in 1971 and the former under the title of Seascape came in 1975. Though these plays bear a certain resemblance to each other in their themes, they adopt contrasted perspectives on life. In Seascape emphasis is laid on the beginning of life and has an optimistic outlook, but in All Over we are given a picture of a life, the track of something that might have been and has its bout of melancholia, very often coupled with bitterness.

All Over is the first play in the era of the seventies and also is the first family play wherein the average age of all characters is sixty-five, except that of the son and the daughter (whose age is 52 and 45 respectively). As they unravel the sub-conscious mind, their inner self comes out. The play is about seven characters, waiting at the hospital room for the rich man-Father/ Husband/ lover/ Best friend to die of cancer at any time. These seven characters are in search of finding out any semblance of meaning left over in their life. As the dying man breathes his last, these characters are tested and probed. Commenting on this play, Albee in one of his interviews declared:

I write plays about how people waste their lives. The people in this play (All Over) have not lived their lives; that's what they're screaming and crying about.16

All Over portrays a family in the process of disintegration. This process combines with the process of dying of an eminent and affluent lawyer, who is the axis around which his whole family revolves. Now that this axis is about to be defaced, the members of the family are disturbed over the impending crisis and loss. Whether the master of the house was ill, or he had been away from his family members for the
past twenty years paying occasional visits to them; makes no difference as it was not a close knit family. But still he was a tie that held the family together. Now, his death will tear the family apart. His unseen deathbed provides an opportunity for a get together among his Mistress, Wife, Son, Daughter and Best friend. Along with them are the Nurse and a Doctor and each one takes an opportunity to reflect upon the kind of life they have led.

The accent in the play All Over is upon the past and reassessment of how life has been lived. The play is more on life than on family life. Taking the family as a backdrop, Albee projects various lives which have been lives lived in various degrees of waste. Each member of the family feels, after self assessment, that he has done nothing substantial in his life except live for his own self. The wife truly remarks in the end:

All we've done ...is think about ourselves what will become of me ... and me ... and me.17

Her recurrent phrase, “The little girl I was when he came to me,” (P.25) shows that she still remains the same little girl.

Albee’s All Over reveals his conviction that a self-less affectionate relationship hardly exists between parents and children. The Daughter lives with a married man who will not divorce his wife. He instead gives her broken ribs and a black eye, and almost involves her family in a Mafia scandal. She tells her brother: “I feel like a child, rebellious, misunderstood and known ... so very well; sated and empty” (P.58) She will be glad if her father dies because she can be what she chooses to be.

79
The son who remains a bachelor is quite immature and disappointing. He is still a small child at fifty plus and is unable to do anything substantial in life. Their mother is much relieved that neither her son nor her daughter has any child. She would prefer to end the lives when it is "... at its zenith" (P.81) The daughter tells her brother "We'll see each other less, all of us ... will be our own affair." (P.156) There are already signs of further disintegration in the family. The family has all gone to pieces. It is "All Over".

As Albee has shown in All Over, the failure of the siblings in establishing a warm relationship does not denote the failure of children but of their parents who have established their family on alienation and have prepared "earlier for the children to become adult strangers, instead of growing ones". (P. 131) Though the siblings in A Delicate Balance and All Over are not bound to each other by love and compassion, something else binds them - blood and the same kind of binding exists between the husband and wife, in both the plays. As Agnes says, "... but blood binds them. Blood holds us together when we've no more ... deep affection for ourselves than others" (P.152) Of course, "Blood is thicker than water!"

By depicting immature and psychic sons and daughters, Albee consistently reminds his American audience how succeeding generations have miserably failed to bring up children in a proper manner. Ironically, their wealth and opulence are in no way helpful to bring up morally sound children. Albee's melancholic judgment on his generation should not be viewed as "the condition of America as a nation but on the institution of the family throughout the world". Albee's concern is that this erosion in the family life should be checked before it is widened and destroy the very fabric of the society.
The whole play talks about the death of the dying man but we are aware of the fact that the persons who are around him are already ‘dead’ in their flesh and the spirit and so they are dying a death invariably. The wife’s affair with the Best Friend, the Nurse’s liaison with Dr. Dey, the Mistress’ illicit love with “three men and a boy” and the Daughter’s life with a man “who will not divorce his wife to marry her” are ample proofs of dehumanization and deadness of spirit of the modern world. They may physically feel alive but are already spiritually dead.

Albee has opted for a family unit not because of the love or nurture it affords but because for him “family is the way that the society has devised to avoid facing the truth about her own selfish natures.” The family units have been preserved in all his plays despite lack of understanding, failure of love, infidelity, non-communication and alienation. In later plays of Albee, Counting the Ways and Seascape, the love-hate relationship is only between the husband and the wife and devoid of interference from others.

Counting the Ways is a random collection of skits and Albee deliberately uses the so-called formlessness just to reflect the play’s subject matter, which is the state of modern marriage. Albee strongly believes that romantic love and marriage in the modern era is essentially hollow, empty and devoid of any substance and meaning. That is why he uses functional names like Mommy and Daddy, He and She too portray the modern family members.

Counting the Ways consists of modern married couple She and He who represent not a universal couple but a couple who form the core of modern American family. The couple is She and He and not He and She and therefore this family is formless. The anonymous couple is
obsessed with their actions and feelings to find a semblance in their life. They define, decode and decipher in a futile attempt to establish some tangible meaning, to their relationship. In short, their whole life seems to be an affair of maintaining a 'Protocol' (She means both literal and figurative). She shouts at him

Protocol! Protocol supersedes all things – grief, joy, all ... things. We would be nowhere without it. Everything hangs on it. He. (P. 37)

Later she clarifies her stand on it by saying that it is “the coding of orders, procedures, etiquette, formality etc”, and he, in an utter disgust and frustration shouts back at her:

Fiddlesticks! It's table of contents! (P.39)

The loss of meaning in the couple's life is best illustrated in the play's subtitle A Vaudeville. This popular form of entertainment in the nineteenth century America suggests the atmosphere and structural qualities which Albee needed so as to reproduce the meaninglessness of the couple's lives. Their love is Vaudevillian slapstick. They mostly thrive on parody and that is what happens in Counting the Ways.

The couple in this play maneuvers each other to escape intimacy, which is the adhesive element in a family. Lack of intimacy leads them to a longing of unconscious separation. Presenting a cozy scene, they look friendly outwardly, but they are more than adversaries inwardly. They find opportunities to dig at each other. She wants to know whether He loves her, forgetting the basic principle that love is not a one-way traffic and it should be acted and not talked upon. Even if He says that He loves her, He may not mean it. As a man, He is not interested in such a question but grows suspicious of them. At the
outset, they are shown “each standing on one side of the stage near their exit ways” (P.7) which is a sure sign that they are already estranged physically and alienated emotionally. The family is not built on rock but on a sandy land.

*He* and *She* argue, discuss and question among themselves for clarity and understanding but there is no movement, no progress and no action as communication between them often breaks down. Once Albee said in an interview:

> There are several ways of families to hang together. One is to ask questions. Another is to ask all questions. When you ask no questions you hang together until you just disintegrate and aren’t aware the disintegration is taking place and if you ask all questions you may possibly recreate a family structure but with firmer bonding.²¹

In Albee's view, one of the symptoms of the dissolution of a marriage is seen in the couple's order to be one's own self, the partners should be able to communicate but *He* and *She* have trouble with questioning and answering. Both of them do not give straight forward answers. Even at the outset, the audience is informed that all is not well with this couple.

They are both reading the newspaper. While reading the newspaper, *She* demands of him whether he loves her. *He* answers her with a monosyllabic 'Hm' and a double syllable 'Pardon' [P.5] *She* repeats the question with an emphasis on love: Do you love me? Without giving a clear cut reply, *He* asks her why she asks him that. *She* simply wants to know, That's all. When *He* questions her whether she wants an answer right then, *She* becomes "suddenly uncertain"
(P.6) and her waywardness is exposed. They spite each other. Children could bridge the gap but in the sterile world of Albee, this blessing is not there and even if it is there, it is either killed or mutilated. This couple is not sure of the number of their own children. She alternates between three or four. They are also not sure of how long they have been married. He says that it is seven years but she corrects him with six years but the truth is not yet come. They simply whine and grunt; whine and grunt help them heighten the strife and tension. This play is very much like Ionesco’s play *The Bald Soprano*, where a married couple after a logical argument arrives at the conclusion that they must be husband and wife since they happen to share the same house, room and bed.

Scene VII, their estrangement seems to be total. She has placed a beautiful rose in a vase, which is a symbol of love. He circles it, takes it from the vase and de-petals it. This is a damaging game indeed, which He plays against her. After de-petting some petals, He chews the rest which is otherwise killing of the remaining love between them. Only the stem is there, which means only the form or the frame of the marriage remains. As each petal adds fragrance and beauty to the rose, each emotional feeling should add to the flavor of the family life, but here He de-petals those feelings of love leaving the frame of life empty.

She looks at the stem. She is dismayed. She picks up the petals and relates them to the stem. She plays the game, “Me loves He? Not me love He?” (P.17) her relating the petals to the stem is ridiculous because it is impossible, foolish and unreasonable. He actually tells this to her:

*Aren’t you silly? Here’s a new one, What were you doing? (P 18)*
In other words love which is the cementing force between the husband and wife if once lost the amount of patch will be of no use. That is what exactly happens in this family. Rose, the symbol of universal love is de-petalised and chewed away by this nameless husband and the wife's relating the petals to the stem is futile and frivolous.

The physical space between the couple and their lives is a symbol of emotional vacuity in their life. He woefully regrets:

When did it happen? When did our lovely bed ... split and become two? When did a table appear where there had been no space, in the center of our lovely bed? (P.33)

It is common knowledge that separate beds forbid any possibility of intimacy. It chills one's heart when he deplores the two beds.

They're not wide, those beds; they're single;
They're for a solitary, or for a corpse. (P.34)

First they escape intimacy; then separation is inevitable. There is no point of return, which leads them to the blind alley in their married life.

Her “Do you love me?” in the first scene becomes vicious and broader in the last scene. She enquires of him:

If you love me ... how do I Know
You love me? (P.49)

His positive response is an eye opener to her. After giving an absolute reply to her, now He demands of her love. Her answer is dubious. She says “I don’t know.” But after a while, she changes her
mind and assures him, “I think, I do” (P.51) She is not sure if she loves him but she thinks that she loves him. Her cryptic words particularly the verb “think” is a specious twist of her way of life centered on sterile love. As She began so She ends the play with the same skepticism and indecision. Yet, they live a false life proclaiming to the world that they are husband and wife. As they are emotionally insensitive and spiritually bankrupt, their loss is irreparable and colossal.

Regarding the dissolution of their marriage, Albee consistently portrays a number of double images, which stand for disunity, separation and death of all sorts—namely physical, spiritual and emotional. This can be seen in the dedication of the play itself. It is for “Bill and Willy and Willy and Bill”. Everything destructive seems to come in twos. This is a two-character play and a single marriage is gradually disintegrated into two. He prefers tea but she prefers coffee. She likes Crème brûlée while he enjoys raspberry fool. They both narrate two stories each focusing on losses. He likes dandelions and daisies but she is fond of gardenias and roses. These images bring two things viz., “Cease and Corryton” (p.81) He bluntly resorts to the use of duality to characterize loss and destruction. While discussing his ‘premature grief’ [P.42], he warns of the loss of life producing semen. He observes 

“ya … ya hard [P.43]

This is clear warning given by Albee that masturbation and homosexuality are the bare reality of American society which not only brings ‘pre-mature grief’ to the life but also eats away the very fibre and vitality of men whose virility is vital for a happy family.

Violating all theatrical norms, Albee has shocked his audience by presenting the emptiness of modern romantic love through the vacuity
of the stagecraft and the Vaudevillian parody, the characters empty
lives in the play.

Albee's *A Delicate Balance*, *The lady from Dubuque*, and
*Finding the Sun* represent the bareness of friendship in American
society. As in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *All Over*, a group
of people in *The lady from Dubuque* come together for a ritual
exorcism of illusion. The appearance of sociability is quickly exposed
as sham. The void at the heart of relationships is revealed. The friends
meet weekly, for parties and play games to amuse themselves. They
show weariness of social activities which have become compulsory in
American society. As the primary character of the play, Jo asks the
audience, "Don't you just hate them?" 22 (P.6) The games are played
not with interest but to spend time cheerfully among friends. As they
are filled with hatred and repulsion they end up ridiculing one another
ironically. The friends meet every week, as Fred says, "where else can
you come in this cold world, week after week, as regular as patch work,
and be guaranteed with ridicule and contempt. (P.30) Jo's answer, "Oh!
There must be lots of places, Fred. You have friends; this can't be the
only place". (P.30) and Edgar's assurance that Fred would come to his
house since he would also provide the same ridicule and contempt,
discloses Albee's belief that friendship is not marked by love but by
disgust.

Friendship in Albee's plays never does attempt to establish a
permanent relationship among them. They have disgust for each other;
and most of the times they turn out to be enemies. They accuse each
other and at times torture one another both physically and mentally. No
basic belief underlies their friendship; no real understanding or love
binds them together. Friendship, like all other human relationship
portrayed in Albee's plays is spurious. No commitment or responsibility
holds them together, yet they maintain their friendship as a social ritual. Friends in Albee's plays behave like couples: "Friendship is something like marriage ... for better and for worse?" 23

The empty games and bitter arguments, as in so many of Albee's earlier plays; are a substitute for a genuine contact. The friends in the play can display nothing beyond contempt. They fail to provide the needed comfort to Jo, Sam's wife who is dying apparently of cancer. Jo is not able to get solace either from her husband or from her friends. They except Lucinda are too terrified of her. Lucinda and Jo have known each other for a very long time and it has been Jo's habit to criticize and to jeer Lucinda when ever the opportunity strikes because she dislikes Lucinda and her ways. In spite of Jo's tyrant behavior, Lucinda shows love and compassion towards Jo.

The play like many others of Albee, is about winding down. Besides the apparent dying of Jo, there is also an extreme form of slow death of life, as it is of the disintegration of social form and the slow collapse of language. The spiritual and moral death of characters is evident through their conversation. The dying of affection, the decline of the body and the loss of political commitment are presented as parallel realities. This in fact is seen when Sam, husband of the dying Jo, speaks of his wife's decline. It simultaneously shows the collapse of the society: "Each day, each night, each moment, she becomes less and less. My arms go around ... bone? She ... diminishes. She moves away from me in ways! ... The thing we must do about loss is, hold onto the object we're losing. There's time later for ... ourselves. Hold on! ... but, to what? To bone? To air? To dust? (P.61) As C.W.E. Bigsby says, "In one sense his (Albee) portrayal of characters in this play are what mankind has become, the play running down the curtain not only on the American dream but on the whole dream of human advancement" 24
In society represented by Albee, the individuals remain as friends because Jo comments:

We need surface to bounce it all of ... because it's too much trouble to change it all and because we probably do love them in spite of everything. (pp. 47-48)

Friends do not have anything in common among them, yet they maintain their relationship, since friendship is a necessary social commitment. Fred remarks "I am still pretending to be pleasant, but these social events are wearing out a man" (P.23) explain how parties are turned out to be indispensable in American society.

Unlike Elizabeth who seeks identity by the part he plays in Jo's life as her mother, Sam identifies himself by his belonging which is valued by his society ... both personal and material: "I'm Jo's husband, this is my house." (P. 77) He hopes to gain identity in a society which values only standards and not relations and he is left disillusioned. In a very interesting article, "Going to Hell with Albee", Jack Kroll says that all the noise about identity, death, and the end of the world may mean that Albee's living-room is really a Hi-tech Hell for the posthumous spirits of a burnt out civilization." This seems an exaggeration and the living-room of Albee ... if it can be called Hell ... is a Hell in which there are Angels also in the form of Elizabeth and Oscar.

If friendship is to be true and lasting, it requires that “we must be helpful when we can ... that is the ... responsibility, the double demand of friendship ... is it not?” Albee through The lady from Dubuque has created awareness regarding the ultimate responsibility of a human being, to extend love to the entire humanity. It is love that unites the human beings and the negation of it ultimately destroys life itself. According to Albee, creating a community by establishing human
relationship based on love and affection has been realized as a basic need for human existence.

Albee, in bringing three generations together in *Finding the Sun* seems to be making one of his frequent reappraisals of the American way of life. The sense of continuity in the social set-up may or may not be there with the death of Haden representing the older generation, and with the middle generation craving only for a sense of belonging. The characters, mostly couples, unveil their hidden stories and they seem that they are able to survive only by ‘finding the sun’ that symbolizes life. Each character has equal genuine stories to tell and their telling and acting culminate when the sun is at the peak. The individual stories of these characters tend to converge into a common plot, which is finding the sun.

*Finding the Sun* is a one-act play depicting the story of two couples who decide to go on vacation together to a beach. Although, the title sounds an optimistic note, the still sad music of the culture gone away strikes a dismal note in the play where Albee for the first time openly discusses homosexuality adding to the complexity of life. By presenting tragic humor and tragic situations, Albee attempts to illustrate how a willingness to settle for a less than desirable life can lead to fear, loneliness and dissatisfaction.

*Finding the Sun* situates a group of people-Americans at the beach. They are all trying to find the sun-pursuing happiness as far as they are able to. There is an older couple, both of whom have lost their previous spouses. There is a mother and son named Edmee and Fergus and two sets of couples Abigail –Benjamin and Cordelia – Daniel. The two young men in the couples have previously been lovers. (A+B, C+D and B+D) Equations and triangles have to be employed to
understand the complexity of modern life. It is also interesting to see that Albee for the first time opts for giving his characters proper names. They act as a formula to help us remember who is who. This is again a reminder of the universal nature of the issues faced by the individuals.

For the first time Albee dramatizes the younger generation that in his earlier plays took the back seat. All these people have come together at the beach in search of the sun; the sun illuminates everything and shows us these people as they are. We see that they are all passing their time and no one is happy. Their holiday is spoilt with deceit, insecurity and possessiveness. In the background is the relentless sea, an archetypal symbol of life as well as death. Life is perpetual flux as Charlie was forced to admit in *Seascape*. The characters are introduced in small family units and the families start intermingling as the action unfolds.

Benjamin and Daniel are surprised to find each other on the same beach. Abigail and Cordelia are aware that these men were lovers. Abigail would like to think that her husband is different now because he is married; besides she never lets him out of sight. But Cordelia is more down to earth and reminds her that "A leopard doesn't change its spots". (P.20) Abigail's reply is that if Cordelia has chosen to close her eyes to Daniel's way, if they have an 'arrangement', then they are in a "moral quagmire". (P.20) Cordelia talks frankly to Daniel and is probably aware of his deceits such as not admitting to see Benjamin, but she lets it be. Cordelia threatens divorce but Daniel is confident she will not proceed for the following reasons:

You wouldn't dare! Your family'd kill you over the publicity: famous former deb, mainline family heirloom-heiress, sorry! —married to fag, file for annulment, names hubby's former hubby as ... P.23)
Abigail just shuts her eyes to the truth and she is the one going to be hurt most by treachery.

Cordelia at least has her mother to confide in with whom she discusses the pros and cons of being married to a homosexual; But Abigail has no family to confide in. Bursting into tears she confides in Fergus whom she has met for the first time that the second tragedy in her life is being “married to a fairy!” (p. 29)

Abigail has made her life solitary one by withdrawing herself from contact and communication. She tries to drown herself, but she was stopped in time. The sun had disappeared behind the clouds while the drowning mishap took place. In all that confusion Henden had passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of seventy. Henden’s monologue in Scene Ten is about death in which he expresses humanity’s fear of the real; death. He and Gertrude embody the general that produced the mixed up lot in the beach. They had managed to keep up a semblance of continuity but whether they had a sense of belonging, Henden was doubtful because he did not experience the sense of belonging though having been married to his first wife for forty-six years until she died of brain tumor. If this is the situation in Henden’s generation what continuity can be expected from their children? The people on the beach appear to cling on to each other out of a sense of longing to love but not out of genuine love. The failure of relationship and love is repeated as in his earlier plays.

Albee in this play presents a variety of love-normal, homosexual and oedipal. Edmee has been clinging to her sixteen year old son Fergus ever since her husband died four years ago. They look like lovers rather than mother and son to Gertrude. Blond, handsome Fergus is the latest version of the American Dream. Fergus-whose
name is linked with the trope of the sun, is in search of his own identity. He is similar to the Young Man in *The American Dream*—that he is incomplete because he has never been in love with anyone. But his mother Edmee explains her identification with her son, a relationship concluding in an obsessive attachment on the part of the mother, a human connection that reflects the inversion of the mother-child relationship present in almost all dramas of Albee. Because of the excessive identification with his mother, Fergus is the most complex figure. Albee aims at "an examination of the people who have been thwarted willfully" by the social institution and "who have not created their own identities."28

Henden dies, but life will go on with Fergus—American Dream and hope for the future. Look! The sun's returning. What glory! What ... wonder! (p. 43)

By focusing attention on the American middle class families, the failure of human relationships in the family unit—between husband and wife, parents and children, among siblings and among friends and the debasement of values and estrangement of individuals both in family and society is shown in all the plays of Albee. He feels that the American families are estranged from the ideals and a happy family can be created only when the couple realizes the significance of 'love and mercy ... the kind you can't hold back as a reward, or use as any sort of weapon.' He says:

When we keep something in shape we maintain its (family's) shape, -whether we are proud of that shape, or not, is another matter—we keep it from falling apart. We do not attempt the impossible. We maintain. We hold."29
Finally Albee says that race, religion and class become barriers to mankind and they may put men into cages when they twinkle like exhibits of creation, unable to shine everlastingly and to live happily and peacefully. Albee proposes “re-vivified human relationships as lying at the core of a reconstituted society” to retain joy and peace in this world.
REFERENCES


5. Anne Paolucci, *From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), P.5


11. Ibid P.294


16. New York Times (18, April, 1971) Internet


23. Newsweek, Feb 11, 1980, P.57 Internet


27. Edward Albee: *Finding the Sun*; Antaeus; Edited By Daniel Halpern, No.66, Spring, 1991

