

## **Différance, Erasure and Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961)**

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### **Abstract**

*The main objective of this paper is to deconstruct the idea / philosophy of American Dream through a critical examination of Edward Albee's play *The American Dream* (1961). The said text is explored through the lens of two deconstructive terms i.e. *Différance* and *Erasure* from Jacques Derrida's theory of Deconstruction. The purpose is to expose in elaboration the ugliness and disintegration of American society and Individual. It is argued that Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), as a postmodern American play, divulges the deplorable condition of American society which finds its reflection in materialism, as well as in social and moral alienation. The purpose of applying Derridean Deconstructive terms is to analyze different aspects of language used by Albee to highlight not only the social but also the psychological issues of American people.*

**Keywords:** American Dream; Derrida; *Différance*; Erasure; Alienation; Indifference; Chaos

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Language is a fundamental tool of communication which does not contain only one meaning; its strength lies in the variety of interpretations. This diversity of interpretations intensifies the chameleonic status of language and also makes it complex and challenging. For French Deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), interpretation of language is not absolute and his Deconstructive term *Différance* plays an important role to provide readers with multiple interpretations and meanings. According to Deconstruction, language does not have a stable meaning; meaning signifies construction, destruction, reconstruction and finally deconstruction. For Derrida, both deconstructive terms *Erasure* and *Différance* focus on the possibilities and probabilities of language which makes meanings of language indeterminate and fluid. The main focus of this paper is to examine and explore the language used by postmodern American playwright Edward Albee (1928-2016) in his play *The American Dream* (1961) to expose the diversity of the interpretations of American Dream as an ideology and as a play. Derridean *Erasure* focuses on the confusion and the thought process of the ideas as Seigel (2009) defines: to highlight suspect ideologies, notions linked to the metaphysics of presence, Derrida puts them under "erasure," metaphorically pointing out the absence of any definitive meaning." (para16) *Erasure* is an important term in the theory of Deconstruction as it focuses on the fluidity of ideologies and notions present in language. *Erasure* exposes the absence of any definite meaning and

that absence signifies the difficulty to understand the language used in text by the author.

Deconstruction makes language more challenging and unfixed which dismantles the authority of one meaning. As Miller, a preeminent deconstructor, has explained in his essay “Steven’s Rock and Criticism as Cure”, “Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself, its apparently solid ground no rock but thin air” (Miller, 1976: 67). Derrida wants to erase the binary oppositions of boundaries. Unlike Structuralists and Formalists, he does not believe in any systems of signs; according to him, language does not stand on binary oppositions rather it goes far beyond in making its interpretations more challenging and different by ignoring the restrictions of connotations. Derrida defines *Différance* in *The Margins of Philosophy* (1982), [it] “reassemble in a *sheaf* the different directions in which I have been able to utilise . . . the word or concept of *Différance*” . . .which is, though, “literally neither a word nor a concept” (Derrida, 1982: 23). Here Derrida uses the word *sheaf* for *Différance* as it is an assemblage of various interpretations and its relationship to the context and the concept. Moreover, it focuses on the complex structure of the setting and the perspective that will make subject challenging as well as ambiguous. *Différance* according to Derrida also investigates the questions and allusions posited by the writing.

### **Différance and Erasure**

In *Of Grammatology* (1976) Derrida explicates the reason of using ‘A’ at the place of ‘e’ to emphasize the graphic understanding of language and its changing status in the text, “. . .graphic difference (*a* instead of *e*), this marked difference between two apparently vocal notations, between two vowels, remains purely graphic: it is read or it is written, but it cannot be heard..” (Derrida, 1967: 4) As Derrida avows that this *Différance* is a fight against the frozen meaning of the word as it cannot be understood in listening only in writing. This draws reader’s attention to the graphical as well as symbolic status of language. Derrida further argues in *The Margins of Philosophy*: “. . . . . play of difference, . . . . .as Saussure reminded us, is in itself a silent play” (Derrida, 1982: 5). He exposes not the duality but the multiplicity of language and its functions. The differences are important in language as they expose the richness of the language and the diversity in the concept. Derrida also refers Saussure to reveal the idea of Difference by showing his interest in Saussure’s idea of signs, *Différance*, and physical imprint, “. . . . .in language, there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.” (Derrida, 1982: 11)

Keeping in view the Derridean definition of *Différance*, it is nothing concrete but a process and the process that makes writing more mobile and different. It makes

writing to 'differ and to 'defer' as well. Writing for Derrida is a practice and *Différance* does not bring order in it but ambiguity to make it different and more challenging. According to Nicholas Royle [Derrida] asserts that *Différance* is a condition; a condition of language and meaning and the "becoming- space of time or the becoming- the time of space" (Royle, 2003: 13). Nicholas further points out, "It is what makes the present possible and at the same time impossible" (Royle, 2003: 74). *Différance* is both impossible and possible as it draws the line between reader and the text and then blurs it at the same time. It is creative and repetitious, clear and ambiguous, and identical and strange as Derrida puts it, "What is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it adds to itself the possibility of being repeated as such" (Royle, 2003: 168)

*Erasure* focuses on the absence of any absolute and definite meaning as it motivates readers to shape and form their own meaning and even that meaning is not definite. Richard Galpin (1998), in his essay 'Erasure in Art' defines erasure,

The origin of the word erasure is radere, to scrape. This implies erasure as an action, and erased text as the sign of that action. The scraping which is usually employed to remove the mark or sign could perhaps be exercised more in the spirit of agitation. (Galpin 1998: para 7)

*Erasure* wants to explore the scrape of the text to get multiple meanings and meanings from the text do not contain the finality within them rather they will be removed by other reader to explore other meanings. It seems that according to erasure, meaning can be reconstituted after being removed by the reader and this highlights the richness of text and the job the reader is to explore while deconstructing it. As Derrida makes a statement, "A sheet of paper preserves indefinitely but is quickly saturated. A slate, whose virginity may always be reconstituted by erasing the imprints on it, does not conserve traces." (Derrida, 1980:72). It seems that *Erasure* helps reader to redefine the meanings without stopping the further interpretations. It helps reader to erase older meaning to shape and form the new one which is flexible and fluid. *Erasure* and *Différance* both help and challenge readers to explore the text to find new meanings and they place reader at a position where he himself can construct, destruct and deconstruct the text.

### **Fluidity of Language and the American Dream**

If one observes these two terms closely they have one focal point and that is the fluidity, richness and mutability of the interpretations of meaning. Derrida in *Positions* (1980) insists that deconstruction is not a theory but an activity of reading

which also establishes its connection with the possibility of different interpretations which make text as a continuous flow of multiple meanings:

First, Difference refers to the (active and passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving...second, the movement of difference, as that which produces different things, that which differentiates, is the common root of all the oppositional concepts that mark our language, such as, to take only a few examples, sensible/ intelligible, intuition/ signification, nature/culture, etc. (Derrida, 1980: 123)

Here Derrida provides important points regarding *Différance*; he mentions active and passive movements, possibility, oppositional concepts, indivisible unity and usage of language. Here by possibility Derrida means that language has lot of possible meanings within it and that various means convey different interpretations of situation, characters, circumstances and actions. This concept presented by Derrida might be applied to post war and postmodern American Drama. These terms might be applied to Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), *The Zoo Story* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. In Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), characters are superficially active yet spiritually, mentally and morally passive. Mommy and Daddy move on the stage aimlessly. At one moment, they try to find out the belonging of Grandma but the very next moment they are unable to figure out what are they doing. Both Mommy and Daddy represent the modern age which assume to be active, yet they are morally passive. They want to get rid of Grandma, and they have mutilated the twin without having any feeling of pity and fear, rather they need their money back which they spent for the adoption of that "heavenly twin". In Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1958), Jerry is scared of losing his bench in Central Park Zoo. He has a strong and uncontrollable wish to kill his landlady's dog. Jerry's interpretation of his life and existence is absurd, weird, incongruous, inconsistent and meaningless. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) George and Martha brawl over a never existing son and they also torture, persecute, and tease Nick and Honey for Honey's self-assumed pregnancy.

The language used by Edward Albee presents not only the absurdity, agitation, disturbance and anxiety but it also demonstrates a sense of loss and emptiness. Characters and situations mentioned above represent the flaccid existence. This is the life of a modern man in general and modern American life in specific. The reason of being specific about American people is that they have an aim, inspiration and insight in form of American Dream. A Dream which illuminated

and enlightened the American people of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but in twentieth century it has been turned into flabby and slack interpretations of decaying American thought and spirit. Derridean concept of language and its meanings are quite evident from *Albeaan* (my italics) usage of language where language has not been used as a tool but as a character, as an action, as a situation and this situation, character, and action keep changing its interpretation and analysis.

Language in Albee's plays is a character that works both passively and actively in shaping up the play and also helps readers to understand the shapeless, ill-defined and amorphous lives of American people. Derridean *Différance* can be applied to Albee's plays as it reveals the incongruities, shabbiness and raggedness of American society. A society which should have followed a set pattern of beliefs and principles, yet it becomes an easy prey to materialism, avariciousness, alienation and isolation gifted from the modern and progressive world. Language which is used by Albee exposes the differences among the characters and between the characters and the languages. As Derrida states, "In language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms..." (Derrida, 1980: 45).

According to Derrida, language is based on differences; which means that language is not a fixed system of words as each word represents something difference whenever it is spoken. Language not only represents the behavior of character, but it also presents the chameleonic status of human attitudes, manners, feelings and approach. Each word represents the multiple interpretations and analysis of the way it is spoken. As Derrida's *Difference* is quite different from Saussurean Difference because, "Saussurean term 'difference' denotes the distinction between signs which is responsible for signification, Derrida's term '*Différance*' simultaneously denotes the displacement and the deferral which impedes the clarity of significance" (Derrida, 1980: 67). Difference, according to Derrida, is a process of displacement and disorder in language which means language is fluid yet ambiguous and confusing and it makes language presenting multiple meanings, connotation and denotations. Usage of language in Edward Albee's plays represents American society, culture and American Dream confused, perplexed, dislocated, disintegrated and collapsed. *Différance* makes language in Edward Albee's plays multifaceted as it reveals the situations and conditions of American people and their dilemma and predicament.

In Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), language plays with the characters as it has been mentioned that language is itself a character in Albee's plays. In *The American Dream* (1961), Youngman narrates his story about himself and his twin

to Grandma who is the only harbinger of ethics and values. After his sad and poignant narration, he warns Grandma about the authenticity, genuineness and validity of his agonizing story, “Be careful, be very careful. What I have told you may not be true” (Albee, 1961: 48). This is what language plays with the characters which are making characters ambiguous, tricky and fiddly. Whatever the characters are narrating and stating they represent multiple meaning. What Youngman wants to state is quite vague. After narrating his story, he himself is not sure about the authenticity of his story and he also warns Grandma not to trust him. This is also related to disintegrated and fragmented life of the people. Characters (except Grandma) in *The American Dream* (1961) are displaced, disoriented and bewildered and they are unable to gather themselves. The role of language in this play reveals the characters’ inner restlessness, absurdity and irrationality. As Derrida claims that *Différance* neither has existence nor essence. According to this, Derrida means to say that language can be twisted to any meaning and meaning can be related to any interpretation and even that interpretation is not final and absolute rather its changeability and variability makes language more fluid and hidden meaning is more challenging and exigent.

### **Jacques Lacan and the Language in Modern American Drama**

According to Lacan, “World of language creates the world of things” (Lacan, 1977: 47). This is what words do; making their own world and shapes the world of things. This activity of words makes language more fluid, flexible and supple. This suppleness, flexibility and elasticity of language are quite evident in Albee’s usage of language in his plays. Albee uses simple language but by using simple language, he conveys a very complex interpretation of human behavior, psychology, attitude and approach. Characters in his plays are conversing with each other yet they show and expose the collapsed minds, shattered beliefs and ethics, and inevitability and inescapability of the existence. They not only expose the unpredictability of human behavior but also depict the demoralized and dispirited society which has been disfigured and defaced by moral, social, and familial degeneration and deterioration. In Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961), American Dream might be taken as a twin who has been mutilated. This is to be noticed that the assumption regarding the mutilation of a twin adopted by Mommy and Daddy might be discussed as a symbolic disfiguration yet in the context of language; it is language which exposes the shortcomings and the weaknesses of American people in understanding the reality of American Dream. Language is simple, yet it narrates the malaise and disturbance within the American society. Deconstruction is to decentralize the meaning in order to make the status of language chameleonic and flexible. According to Russell Fraser (1995), “Deconstruction means to destroy the world, nothing substantial out there and no meaningful speech, only chatter. Of course, the deracinating is supposed to precede better days” (Fraser, 1995: 79). So according to Frazer, pulling up something is to harvest something better. This

uprooting in language signifies the absence of absolute and ultimate meaning that emphasizes and asserts the existence of possibilities. Derrida mentions in *Writing and Différance* (1980), “The absence of ultimate meaning opens an unbounded space for the play of signification” (Derrida, 1980:178). Derrida believes that the absence of meaning in language is the real purpose of language and this real purpose of language has been divulged by Albee in his plays *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Zoo Story* (1958) where meaninglessness and purposelessness of circumstances itself conveys meaning and that meaning is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional.

### **Modern American Dream and meaningless life of American People**

In *The American Dream* (1961), Mommy, Daddy, and Youngman are leading a purposeless life; Mommy and Daddy want to get rid of Grandma who can be taken as the only sign of mortified American Dream and Youngman who, despite all his physical strength and youth, is quite disappointed, confused and befuddled. Language used in the play is quite simple to understand but the meaning it reveals has made this play the most complicated and convoluted one. As Mommy and Daddy talk to each other and make effort to make their conversation focused and persistent. They expose the ridiculousness and absurdity of the situation and which is quite evident from their confused and bewildered actions and dialogues. In *The American Dream* (1961) Daddy is unable to find the Grandma’s belonging and then her room:

Daddy: The truth of the matter is, I can’t even find Grandma’ room.....Mommy: Did you ever hear of such a thing, Grandma? Daddy can’t find your television, and he can’t find the Pekinese, and the truth of the matter is he can’t find your room.  
Grandma: I told you, I hid everything. (Albee, 1961: 102)

The confusion and bewilderment have been exposed by Mommy and Daddy in their behavior and attitude towards Grandma and the existing situation in which they live. Daddy is unable to find Grandma’s belongings and then unable to find Grandma’s room. This is not only the matter of uneasiness and disorder, but it also indicates the collapse of familial relationship. Language exposes the inner emptiness, shallowness and barrenness. Characters are not making use of language rather language makes use of characters and it is also shaping up the characters’ behaviors, attitudes and perception about life. Characters are confused, and language reveals their disillusioned and cynical situation. Characters’ usage of language is exposing their restlessness and futility, yet their language is communicating a meaningful representation of their life. Meaning is not stable,

and that instability is itself meaningful to communicate multiple meanings of the text.

### **Language of Modern Drama and American Dream**

Language provides a certain space where insightful interpretation becomes possible. If one applies this statement to the Plays of Edward Albee it makes clear that language plays its role quite effectively and provides reader a certain insight which helps him to understand the alienation, despair, dejection and glumness of modern man in a modern world. In *The American Dream* (1961), Edward Albee presents a family without any concept of family, most protective and caring characters in the family are the most destructive and vicious ones. Usage of language misguides the reader to find an appropriate presentation of human behavior and nature. Reader can easily find out the self-alienated individuals yet living with each other and these individuals know only one thing and that is their vested interests. Mommy and Daddy are individuals; the word 'individual' has not been used in a positive sense rather they are self-isolated, self-centered, and self-alienated beings who are leading a shallow and superficial life. These characters provide audience a certain experience of their (audience) life. Albee states: "People should be aware of all things at all times. They should experience the extremities of life, fulfill themselves completely. Why does everyone want to go to sleep when the only thing left is to stay awake?"

### ***Erasure, Différance* and the Chameleonic Status of Language used by Albee**

The two deconstructive terms (*Erasure and Différance*) are different in definition yet they head towards the same point and that is the chameleonic status of meaning. If these deconstructive terms are applied to Edward Albee's play *The American Dream* (1961) one can find that meaning has been decentralized and instable as its language depicts the different interpretations of American Dream which makes this phrase more ambiguous, bleak and austere. Mommy, Daddy and Grandma in *The American Dream* (1961) makes use of simple language yet this simple language complicates the themes of this drama. Characters in *The American Dream* (1961) converse with each other in multiple directions or they might be directionless:

GRANDMA: (As Mommy walks through the boxes): The boxes.....the boxes .....

Mommy: Be quiet Grandma. DADDY: What did you say Grandma?

GRANDMA :(As Mommy steps on several of the boxes) The boxes, damn it!

GRANDMA: I don't know if that's what I meant or not. It's certainly not what I thought I meant.  
(Albee, 1961: 56)



This excerpt from *The American Dream* (1961) interprets multiple meanings and sometimes it seems that this is void of all meanings. It seems that Albee is using both terms *Erasure* and *Différance* in a way that they seem interrelated. In the above excerpt, Mommy, Daddy, Grandma and Mrs. Barker they are talking about one object and that is “boxes” yet they are unknown to the fact what are they saying and what they mean to say. They themselves are not sure what the point of conversation is; boxes, Grandma, Mrs. Barker or something else. If one observes the other side of the picture, all these above-mentioned characters convey multiple meaning within their short conversation which is quite suggestive and redolent. Boxes in *The American Dream* (1961) represent the fragmentation of American society on the basis of individuality and eccentricity. Grandma desires to hold the boxes as she assumes that they are the symbol of old American Dream that is broken into bits and pieces. This seems quite similar with *The Sandbox* (1959) in another play of Albee where American Dream seems to be as slippery as sand or these boxes could derive some similarity from Willy Loman’s suitcases in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949) where these suitcases are assumed the burden of American Dream. The diversity of meaning and meaninglessness both seem two different stances which Albee has adopted in his plays quite easily.

#### **Loneliness and Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961)**

Sense of loneliness and meaninglessness are quite apparent in Albee’s *The American Dream* (1961) where characters expose essential purposelessness and futility of human existence which projects the hidden meaning of language as language interprets experiences of individual in a different way as the conversation of Grandma and Young Man in *The American Dream* (1961) where they try to figure out the meaning of life and American Dream in their disintegrated dialogues:

GRANDMA: Yup..... yup, you know, if I were about hundred and fifty years younger I could go for you.

YOUNGMAN: Yes, I imagine so.

GRANDMA: Yup, Boy, you know what you are, don’t you? You’re The American Dream (1961), that’s what you are. All those other people, they don’t know what they are talking about. You .....you are The American Dream. (Albee, 1961: 23)

Grandma and Youngman interpret American Dream differently; for Grandma the strength of young man is American Dream, whereas for Youngman, he himself is not sure what was his strength or not. Though he is proud of his muscular body, yet he does not know how to make use of his strength. This is where language

brings certain difference; instead of emphasizing on binary oppositions, there is a combination of meaning in Grandma's and Youngman's conversation. As Grandma herself is the reminiscence of lost American Dream which is of no use for the young ones and this is better that this should be put in to trash or some store room. This is the reason that Mommy and Daddy want to send Grandma to old home whereas youngsters like Youngman is not sure what to do in his life as they are indecisive, and he has the feeling of being lost and for this reason Grandma says this to Young man in above excerpt that he is *The American Dream* (1961) and this is taken in a larger sense this is a chasm between young and old generation in American society where they are unable to understand and communicate with each other, Grandma wants to keep boxes which contain nothing ,whereas Mommy and Daddy are moving aimlessly on the stage and off stage as their sole purpose is to get rid of Grandma, and Youngman is a symbol of lost generation just like Jerry in *The Zoo Story* (1958) who is unable to communicate both with human beings and animals which also expose the paralysis of communication as well as action.

### **American Dream and the Conflict between Past and Present**

Sterility and stagnancy are quite evident in Albee's plays as well. Mommy, Daddy, Grandma from *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Sandbox*, George and Martha from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) and Jerry from *The Zoo Story* (1958) represent the absence of communication and the barrenness of thought by repeating same words and action. As in *The Zoo Story*, Jerry repeats this line many times, "I have been to the Zoo" (Albee, 1958: 14), Martha's and George's conversation regarding History and Biology, and their missing son, last but not the least in *The American Dream* (1961); there is a disconnected conversation among Mommy, Daddy and Grandma in which they say something with the sense of nothingness about boxes:

MOMMY: Why Grandma look at you! what is all  
that you are carrying?

GRANDMA: They are boxes. What do they look  
like?

MOMMY: Daddy! Look at Grandma; look at all  
the boxes she's carrying!

DADDY: My Goodness, Grandma; look at all  
those boxes. (Albee, 1961: 34)

In this excerpt from *The American Dream* (1961) Mommy, Daddy and Grandma are talking to each other without having any proper integration. Boxes which Grandma carry are the representation of collapse and dissolution of language yet providing manifold meanings and connotations within the American settings as these boxes could be taken as memories from past and it could also be taken as

broken harmony of conversations which convey the hollowness and shallowness of American society and its treatment of American Dream which are quite important in terms of *Différance* and *Erasure*. In Albee's plays, there is nihilism, disorder and chaos which has been conveyed though the emptiness and bleakness of language. Chaos and nihilism seem to have an important place in Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) and *The Sandbox* by showing indifference and coldness towards American Dream, by searching meaning in life and by dumping the old values in old home or in sandbox to get rid of past for not hailing present and future rather they want to become a part of materialism and greed.

### **American Dream and the Disfigured American Society**

Albee believes that *The American Dream* (1961) "is an examination of the American Scene, an attack in the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity; it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of our is peachy-keen" (Albee, 1961: 2). Albee in this excerpt tries to develop a relationship between disproportions and balance. American Dream has become a cliché and lost its coherence as well as rationality. This dream had to be an examination of the self to explore the self-realization. Albee seems to explore what Jerry says in *Zoo Story* is the "real experience" but that real experience is quite deformed and disfigured and that's why Grandma ends *The American Dream* by saying, "let's leave things as they are right now.....while everybody is happy.....while everybody has got what he wants .....or everybody has got what he thinks he wants" (Albee, 1961: 29). People snatch what they want to get yet they want more. People do lot of things without emotions, feelings. Pretentiousness and superficiality are more important than concreteness and solidity. Characters try to be decisive yet fail in pretending so as they have nothing to stand on:

DADDY: Was I firm about it?

MOMMY: Oh, so firm; so firm

DADDY: And was I decisive?

MOMMY: So decisive! Oh I shivered.

DADDY: And masculine? Was I really masculine?

MOMMY: Oh, Daddy, you were so masculine; I shivered and fainted. (Albee, 1961: 17)

This is a kind of a game they are playing with each other and trying to satisfy themselves that they are strong. Especially male in Albee's plays are shallower than the females as they are very much conscious of their masculinity, figure and courage. This is what language is playing a game where meaninglessness and meaningfulness work together. Masculinity in Albee's plays seems to be

meaningless when men are spiritually and morally rotten and this so-called masculinity could be taken as American Dream which has become useless. This is how these characters oscillate between illusion and reality and this is how language communicates the human behavior which is at the same time meaningful and meaningless as well.

### **American Dream, Language and its Absurdity**

Language demonstrates different interpretations and those interpretations reveal characters as well as setting. Albee's use of language projects his characters and their mind. He makes language a character; an alienated character whose presence supports other characters to disclose their true selves no matter how ugly and repulsive they are. Language exposes the absurdity of the characters and setting, and it engages the characters and sometimes disengages them to divulge their true self. Language is playing its role no matter characters are repeating their dialogues, or they are following proper semantic and syntactic structures, yet language makes them realize what they really feel. In Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), language has a vital role in exposing the characters and the futility of their behavior and existence. As these lines of Mommy, Daddy, Grandma and Mrs. Barker expose the breakdown of proper and meaningful communication and also the collapse of relationship:

Mrs. Barker: Oh, I think so. There is too much women hatred in this country, and that's a fact.

Grandma: Oh, I don't know.....

Mommy: Nonsense. Old people have nothing to say; and if old people did have something to say, nobody would listen to them. (Albee, 1961: 19)

In these lines, language exposes the breakdown of communication, relationship and spiritual insight. Characters are talking to each other but there is no logical connection in their conversation. There is suppressed feeling of futility, nothingness and uselessness. Grandma has been hushed up by Mommy as she is rural and old, and nobody would listen to her. All dialogues except the last one does not have proper logical relevance to each other. Language satirizes the characters and their insensitivity towards old people and old morals and values. In *The American Dream* (1961) Language plays two roles; one is that language is exposing the real self of the characters and on the other hand it projects its own futility and purposelessness. Language in Albee's plays has lost its importance and it has been reduced to mumbling, repetition and illogical dialogues. Grotesque situations, illogical dialogues, repetitious expressions, irrational actions and insensitive comments reveal both the futility of language and worthless human existence.

### **American Dream and the American Individual as a Social Outcast**

Mommy and Daddy of *The American Dream* (1961) and *The Sandbox* (1959) are unable to manage and maintain relationships and they want to get rid of Grandma and ironically, they want to dump all the moral and ethical values along with *The American Dream* (1961). Family in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978) is scared of each other and of open secret that every member of the house knows. Their language and conversation are full of menace, threat, fear and anguish and their family life has been collapsed. Though they are living under one roof yet they are unable to understand each other. In *The American Dream* (1961), Mommy and Daddy mutilate and murder the twin not only to show their gothic attitude towards humanity but reveal the bitter truth that American Dream has been murdered. Their communication does not have any logical sequence as structure of language has been collapsed.

### **Conclusion**

This paper is an attempt to expose and analyze Edward Albee's usage of language in his play *The American Dream* that mirrors American Individual's superficial character and behavior. Albee takes language as a character as it plays a significant role in revealing deteriorated status of postmodern American Society. Language during postmodern and post war era has been quite challenging as it has to play many roles. It has to expose truth and artificiality, reality and illusion, depth and shallowness of characters, setting, environments and circumstances. In this paper, language of Albee has been examined with the help of Deconstructive terms Différance and Erasure to expose the rottenness and stagnation of postmodern American society. Both Différance and Erasure highlight the absurdity within the language, characters and the settings of *The American Dream*. Albee's language is deceptively simple and easy and this *deception* (my italics) depicts the complexity of verbal expression and the deterioration of social and moral conditions. Meaninglessness, meaningfulness, Disproportion and balance work together in *The American Dream* and this process is reflected through the usage of language. This paper is an effort to disclose manifold connotations of the language used by Albee to expose its inherent inconsistency and instability.

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