

**CHILDREN AND CHILDISHNESS IN EDWARD ALBEE'S
*WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?***

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ABSTRACT

Children are the most beautiful beings in the world. They are the real creatures who smiled from their hearts. One can find real love and happiness in them. Children are the best blessings given by the God to a couple that makes their life complete with the love and laughter they bring. On the other hand being a couple not having a child will not be taken as an ordinary thing. Even the society never let them lead their freely and keep on digging the same question that makes them to feel their life quiet boring and meaningless one. The same situation was faced by the couple who was in good profession and gained good name in the society. When the society started questioning about their parenthood, they experienced how far they have been detachment from the real life. Edward Albee in his drama portrayed the pain of a childless parent and their double role who pretended having a child in order to escape from the caramelized poisonous words from the society.

Keywords: Children, Society, Detachment, Parenthood, Experienced

Edward Albee, a modern American playwright was the owner of the famous chain of Keith Albee Theatre has written a play *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. The play was divided into three acts namely Fun and Game, Walpurgisnacht and The Exorcism. The play was published in 1962 which is rich in sadistic humour and symbolism. The play is an absurd drama which means a reaction apparently without meaning or a man as a puppet.

The story *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* dealt mainly about the childless couples Martha & George and Honey & Nick. This drama is meant mainly for the characterization such as Sterility and lust, Reality and illusion, Personal failure and mock religious ceremony. The play exactly started at 2.AM on a Sunday Morning in the house of George, a History Professor in New England College. He married his College President's own daughter Martha, who is eight years elder to him.

They married long back and they don't have child in real, but they have cooked up a story that they had a son who worked in a foreign nation. This imaginary character was mainly created by the couple in order to escape from the criticism by the society. As a normal couple they also had faced childlessness as a great struggle in their life. This kind of problem is usually quite common in nations like India, where people considered the society system and the family life as their own predominant factors to lead their life happily.

Being a childless parent, they themselves consider as a child to each other. These types of characters were abruptly shown through the activities such as teasing each other sarcastically, spending their time for each other and having fight over meager things. Edward Ablee had make use of the characters well to show the importance given by self for their own happiness without expecting from any other sources.

Absurdism is the main technique in the play *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* that show nothing as expected happened till the end. As the name Absurd suggests a reaction apparently without meaning and portraying men as a puppet. Here both Martha as well as George is shown as puppet who pretend to be loyal towards the society. Their primary lie to the society is creating an imaginary child who is not existed in their real life. This shows the pain of the married couple without having a child on their own.

The party was organized by the couple Martha and George who has invited another young couple named Honey and Nick. The time of the party was quite unusual and it was arranged in the house the old couple's home. The very initial stage of their party created a strange mindset to the young couple. The hosts had consumed liquor extremely and they were not able to invite them in a proper way. This is how the party gets started.

Nick was addressed as a strapping blond youth and Honey as a mousy blond by Edward Albee. Even this pair also never thought of having child of their own. Time made two set of childless parents to meet and have fun among them. Though all the four gathered in a single place is matured enough in their age, they behaved like children. The childishness is represented through these immature characters of all the four grownup children.

George started teasing Nick and honey teasing Martha for their behavior. Unexpectedly George revealed the truth that he was highly disappointed by his marriage with a college President's daughter i.e. Martha. The particular scene reveals the childishness of the childless couple clearly. When they were talking about the profession mainly when George came to know about Nick as a biologist, he started accusing Scientist' for rearranging genes. George himself talked about the headship of History, he didn't feel sorry for not being elevated to a higher level.

Nick came out with a truth that he and his wife Honey have no idea of having children until they get settled in their life. Meanwhile shockingly and surprisingly Martha revealed that they were going to celebrate the birthday of their imaginary boy. This heavily disappointed George and he was literally unaware how to react for the announcement.

In the second act Walpurgisnacht, a German term meaning the meeting of the devils, where they reveal the secretes to their master. The title is appropriate to the present situation in the mean time of the play. Here the four characters Martha, George, Nick and Honey were represented as devil where they were about to reveal a secret which was unknown to the society. At the end of the act-I, Honey was feeling sick and rushed her to the toilet. Everyone thought that it was a symptom for her pregnancy, but Nick broken the belief by saying that it was hysterical pregnancy.

It is usually a quite common mindset among the children when they unknowingly revealed the secret and stumble without knowing what to do at the end. This is the character of Nick too. Honey feel betrayed when Nick came out with the truth that he married Honey only for her money from her father who was a priest by profession. All the three characters wanted to take revenge against Nick for his cheap attitude. They ended the game called 'Humiliate the Guest' and started playing a new game named 'Get the guests game'. Children usually do naming a game and play accordingly, here these two childless couple considered them as

children and enjoyed their life in a loyal way. One can see honesty and punishment when children play. Also the readers or the audience could notice the childish behaviour among the characters when they want to punish Nick for his cheap behavior.

Albee did not only create the atmosphere of a world where the children could enjoy but he has created a world where people like Martha and George can consider them as a child and forgot their pains in their life. Through the discussions Albee has brought out the childishness possessed by Martha and George. Children are always longing for the passion and care from their parents or someone else. When they are not the centre of focus in someone's attention they try to grab their attention or show their false angry towards them. The same thing happened in the case of Martha and George throughout the play. In the same act itself George wanted to give an end for his imaginary child. He was thinking how Martha would react if he convey the death news of their son.

In the third act named Exorcism, meaning the removal of the evil spirit from a place. Through this act, Albee wants to make the readers understand about the illusory life lead by Martha and George. How Martha and George came out from the illusory life and started accepting their originality is the main theme of this act. Martha by looking at picture of 'Daddy white mouse' she said that he had red eyes because he had been crying all the time like Martha did.

They were ready to play their last game name 'Bringing up Baby'. While playing the game Martha and George got many contradictory ideas on the life style and about the unhappiness in the life of their imaginary child. Finally the old couple let the cat out of the bag. George conveyed Martha that their son died in an automobile accident, identical to that of his friend's death thirty years ago. Martha did not expect this and yelled at her husband saying "I WILL NOT LET DECIDE THESE MATTERS." In turn George asserted that Martha had the right to kill their son because Martha has violated the agreement.

Nick came to know that the old couple lead their life in illusory. The young couple left the home by understanding the situation. At the end George put his hands on Martha's shoulder and sings softly, 'Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf?' for that she replied I am, I am..." the middle

–aged couple at daybreak and they have to live with the naked reality. Though they didn't have child they started leading their life like children.

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