



**A REPORT ON PROJECT WORK OF "CONCEPT OF ABSURDITY  
IN WAITING FOR GODOT."**

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## REPORT

A project on "CONCEPT OF ABSURDITY IN WAITING FOR GODOT" was prepared by students of English Department during the month of April-2020. 03 number of students participated in the project work . They collected several materials on the topic from different libraries and other studious places. The departmental faculties co-operated them in all these works and this project is original.

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## BECKETT'S "WAITING FOR GODOT" AND ABSURDITY

### INTRODUCTION

Samuel Barclay Beckett, an absurdist playwright, novelist, and poet of the twentieth century is most famous for the play *EN ATTENDANT GODOT* (*Waiting for Godot*) which was written originally in French in 1949 and published in English in 1954 (Shrikrishna, 2008). In his writings, Beckett turned to French starting that writing in a language that was not his mother tongue taught him discipline of language and contributed to a sparseness of style. With the change of language, he escaped from everything with which he was familiar, trying hard to create the literature of onward and to yield the silence that underlines them (Article set editors, 2008).

Beckett's works illustrate breaking from the realistic literature and theatre, conventional plot, space, and time focusing on the human condition. His works include characters facing a meaningless and Absurd existence without the comforts of religion, myth, or philosophical absolutes. His short fiction which is often described as fragments rather than stories shows his use of sparse language and stark images of alienation and absurdity to present truths that are free of rhetorical embellishment. His theatre is stark, absurd, and highly pessimistic about the human nature and the human situation. The reaction to his theatre is often dismay. Much of this confusion is brought about by the conflicting interpretations of the text on the part of critical commentators. The important point about his theatre is that very simplicity of his words is disarming at the first sight incompatible with the tragic impact of the situations in which the characters find themselves. Soon, however, it becomes clear that the sparse and bare vocabulary is giving profundity to the statement. In other words, his unique style derived some critics to claim that Beckett was one of the ancestors of post-modernism (Esslin, 1980).

Though *Waiting for Godot* is difficult to make sense of, it is one of the most important works of our time. It revolutionized theater in the twentieth century and had a great influence on succeeding dramatists. After the appearance of *waiting for Godot*, theatre was opened to possibilities that playwrights and audiences had never before imagined. *Waiting for Godot* is the most prominent example of the *Theatre of the Absurd and Modernism* which is

elaborated respectively in the following sections. The project deals with the absurd elements in the above mentioned play. The current paper ends with the Conclusion Section.

## THE TERM ABSURD

The definition of the term "absurd" is very important in order to understand what is meant by the *Theatre and the Literature of the Absurd*.

Both, the *Theatre and the Literature of the Absurd* have the idea that the human condition is essentially absurd and can only be presented in literature that is absurd, too. Their roots are in Expressionism, in Dadaism, in Surrealism and in the Stream of Consciousness Fiction.

Dadaism is a streaming in art and literature that appeared between 1910 and 1924 and regarded itself as anarchic and anti-bourgeois and its art should be anti-rationalist. It could also be seen as an anarchic counter attitude as a kind of protest against conventional art. The word "Dada" is actually French and refers to a toy of children. So, the term "Dada" is kind of imitating the childish sound "dadada". That means, we are talking about an art that is like a newborn child. The centers of Dadaism are in Cologne, New York, Berlin, Vienna and Moscow.

A concrete definition of the term "absurd" is the following:

"Absurd" is something that has no aim [...] When man is cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, he is lost. All his actions become senseless, absurd, useless, nipped in the bud." (Killinger 272)

In a definition of *Collins English Dictionary* it says:

**ab.surd** [ab-surd, -zurd]

Adjective

Utterly or obviously senseless, illogical, or untrue; contrary to all reason or common sense; laughably foolish or false: an absurd explanation.

Noun

The quality or condition of existing in a meaningless and irrational world.

Synonyms

Irrational, silly, ludicrous, nonsensical. Absurd, ridiculous, preposterous all mean inconsistent with reason or common sense. Absurd means utterly opposed to truth or reason: an absurd claim. Ridiculous implies that something is fit only to be laughed at, perhaps contemptuously: a ridiculous suggestion. Preposterous implies an extreme of foolishness: a preposterous proposal.

Antonyms

logical, sensible

As a result, one could say that "absurd" refers to human beings unable to find meaning in the universe.

[...]

## CHAPTER: 1

### CONCEPT OF THE TERM ABSURD

With the appearance of *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) at the Theatre de Babylone in Paris in 1953, the literary world was shocked by the appearance of a drama so different and yet so intriguing that it virtually created the term "Theatre of the Absurd," and the entire group of dramas which developed out of this type of theatre is always associated with the name of Samuel Beckett. His contribution to this particular genre allows us to refer to him as the grand master, or father, of the genre. While other dramatists have also contributed significantly to this genre, Beckett remains its single, most towering figure.

This movement known as the Theatre of the Absurd was not a consciously conceived movement, and it has never had any clear-cut philosophical doctrines, no organized attempt to win converts, and no meetings. Each of the main playwrights of the movement seems to have developed independently of each other. The playwrights most often associated with the movement are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Arthur Adamov. The early plays of Edward Albee and Harold Pinter fit into this Classification, but these dramatists have also written plays that move far away from the Theatre of the Absurd's basic elements.

In viewing the plays that comprise this movement, we must forsake the theatre of coherently developed situations, we must forsake characterizations that are rooted in the logic of motivation and reaction, we must sometimes forget settings that bear an intrinsic, realistic, or obvious relationship to the dramas as a whole, we must forget the use of languages as a tool of logical communication, and we must forget cause-and-effect relationships found in traditional dramas. By their use of a number of puzzling devices, these playwrights have gradually accustomed audiences to a new kind of relationship between theme and representation. In these seemingly queer fantastic plays, the external world is often depicted as menacing, devouring, and unknown; the settings and situations often make us vaguely uncomfortable; the world itself seems incoherent and frightening and strange, but at the same time, it seems hauntingly poetic and familiar.

These are some of the reasons which prompt the critic to classify them under the heading "Theatre of the Absurd"- a title which comes not from a dictionary definition of the word "absurd", but rather from Martin Esslin's book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, in which he maintains that these dramatists write from a "senses of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition". But other writers such as Kafka, Camus, and Sartre have also argued from the same philosophical position. The essential difference is that critics like Camus have presented their arguments in a highly formal discourse with logical and precise views which prove their theses within the framework of traditional forms. On the contrary, the Theatre of the Absurd seeks to wed form and content into an indissoluble whole in order to gain a further unity of meaning and impact. This theatre, as Esslin has pointed out, "has renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition; it merely presents it in being- that is, in terms of concrete stages images of the absurdity of existence."

Too often, however, the viewer notes only these basic similarities and fails to note the distinctive differences in each dramatist. Since these writers do not belong to any deliberate or conscious movement, they should be evaluated for their individual concerns, as well as for their contributions to the total concept of the Theatre of the Absurd. In fact, most of these playwrights consider themselves to be lonely rebels and outsiders, isolated in their own private worlds. As noted above, there have been no manifestoes, no theses, no conferences, and no collaborations. Each has developed along his own unique lines; each in his own way is individually and distinctly different. Therefore, it is important to see how Beckett both belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd and, equally important, how he differs from the other writers associated with this movement. First, let us notes a few of the basic differences.

#### Differences

One of the Samuel Beckett's main concerns is the polarity of existence. In *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Krapp's Last Tape*, we have such characteristics polarities as sight versus blindness, life-death, time present-time past, body-intellect, waiting-not waiting, going- not going, and dozens more. One of Beckett's main concerns, then, seems to be characterizing man's existence in terms of these polarities. To do this, Beckett groups his characters

in pairs; for example, we have Vladimir and Estragon, or Didi and Gogo, Hanin and Clov, Pozzo and Lucky, Nagg and Nell, and Krapp's present voice and past voice. Essentially, however, Beckett's characters remain a puzzle which each individual viewer must solve.

In contrast to Beckett, Eugene Ionesco's characters are seen in terms of singularity. Whereas Beckett's characters stand in pairs outside of society, but converse with each other, Ionesco's characters are placed in the midst of society- but they stand alone in an alien world with no personal identity and no one with whom they can communicate. For example, the characters in *The Bald Soprano* are in society, but they scream meaningless phrases at each other, and there is no communication. And whereas Beckett's plays take place on strange and alien landscapes (some of the settings of his plays remind one of a world transformed by some holocaust or created by some surrealist), Ionesco's plays are set against the most traditional elements in our society- the standard English drawing room in *The Bald Soprano*, a typical street scene in *Rhinoceros*, and an average academic study in *The Lesson*, etc.

The language of the two playwrights also differs greatly. Beckett's dialogue recalls the disjointed phantasmagoria of a dream world; Ionesco's language is rooted in the banalities, clichés, and platitudes of everyday speech; Beckett uses language to show man isolated in the world and unable to communicate because language is a barrier to communication. Ionesco, on the other hand, uses language to show the failure of communication because there is nothing to say; in *The Bald Soprano*, and other plays, the dialogue is filled with clichés and platitudes.

In contrast to the basic sympathy we feel for both Beckett's and Ionesco's characters, Jean Genet's characters almost revile the audience from the moment that they appear on the stage. His theme is stated more openly. He is concerned with the hatred which exists in the world. In *The Maids*, for example, each maid hates not just her employer and not just her own sister, but also her own self. Therefore, she plays the other roles so as to exhaust her own hatred of herself against herself. Basically, then, there is great sense of repugnance in Genet's characters. This revulsion derives partially from the fact that Genet's dramatic interest, so different from Beckett's and Ionesco's, is in the psychological exploration of man's predilection to being trapped in his own

egocentric world, rather than facing the realities of existence. Man, for Genet, is trapped by his own fantastic illusions; man's absurdity results partially from the fact that he prefers his own disjointed images to those of reality. In Genet's directions for the production of *The Blacks*, he writes that the play should never be played before a totally black audience. If there are no white people present, then one of the blacks in the audience must wear a white mask; if the black refuses, then a white mannequin must be used, and the actors must play the drama for this mannequin. There must at least be a symbol of a white audience, someone for the black actors to revile.

### Similarities

Since all of the writers have varying concerns, they also have much in common because their works reflect a moral and philosophical climate in which most of our civilization finds itself today. Again, as noted above, even though there are no manifestos, nor any organized movements, there are still certain concerns that are basic to all of the writers, and Beckett's works are concerned with these basic ideas. Foremost all of these dramatists of the absurd are concerned with the lack of communication.

Each dramatist, therefore, presents a critique of modern society by showing the total collapse of communication. The technique used is that of evolving a theme about communication by presenting a series of seemingly disjointed speeches. The accumulative effect of these speeches is a devastating commentary on the failure of communication in modern society. In conjunction with the general attack on communication, the second aspect common to these dramatists is the lack of individuality encountered in modern civilization. Generally, the point seems to be that man does not know himself. He has lost all sense of individualism and either functions isolated and alienated, or else finds himself lost amid repetition and conformity. Other dramatists present their attack on society's destruction of individualism by different means, but the attack still has the same thematic intent. Perhaps more than any of the other dramatists of the absurd, Ionesco has concerned himself almost exclusively with the failure of individualism, especially in his most famous play, *Rhinoceros*.

presented in terms of burlesque, man is reminded that his position and that of human existence in general is essentially absurd. Every play in the Theatre of the Absurd movement mirrors the chaos and basic disorientation of modern man. Each play laughs in anguish at the confusion that exists in contemporary society; hence, all share a basic point of view, while varying widely in scope and structure.

## CHAPTER-2

### SAMUEL BECKETT : AN ABSURD PLAY WRIGHT

Samuel Beckett is considered as one of the essential absurdist playwrights by Martin Esslin. He characterizes all of Beckett's plays as totally plot less when it is compared with the other works of the Theatre of the Absurd. According to this, plays of Beckett present an overall portrayal of his institution of the human condition rather than a linear development by a polyphonic way. In *WAITING FOR GODOT*, there is no story to be told. The story explores a static situation (Esslin, 2001, p.45). The only activity of playing is waiting for someone calls Godot, who never turns up.

For Esslin, *Waiting for Godot* has an element of crudely physical humor in accordance with traditions of the circus or music halls. It is represented with the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon. They have contemporary personalities: Vladimir is practical of the two, and Estragon is the imaginative ones. Similarly, Pozzo and Lucky are equally contemporary in their natures. However, "their relationship is on a more primitive level" based on a master and slave morality (pp.47-480). Vladimir and Estragon or Pozzo and Lucky, both of couples are complementary despite inconformity. Thus, all the play is built in a peculiar harmony of dual contrasts and echoic repeats. In both Act I and Act II, the same pattern is repeated and the characters follow the same routine everyday: Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot under a tree for the whole day; yet, Mr Godot does not come in any way.

Esslin states that the vision of Beckett cannot be identified with any school of philosophy. *Waiting for Godot* has a peculiar richness which "opens vistas on so many perspectives". The play is "open to philosophical, religious and psychological interpretations", yet above all, it is melted in a poet of mysterious existence, time and evanescence, the paradox of change and stability and lastly, necessity and absurdity.

Not only *Waiting for Godot*, but also many other plays of Beckett including **End game, Act without Words I and II, Krapp's Last**

**type, all That Fall, happy Days,** his radio plays and movies scripts are evaluated as examples of the Theatre of the Absurd by Martin Esslin. In all of Beckett plays, it is considered that absurdity is attained in every part of the play through the characters, as well as through the plot less move and the usage of non-communicable language whereby the unusual conditions or even usual states are occurred in unusual sequence. As stated by Arnold P. Hinchliffe (1969), "In much of Backett's work the tone means more than meaning, and it is this warmth which denies the metaphysician the last word and qualifies Absurdity". Hence, Samuel Beckett is often regarded together with absurd theatre itself.

## CHAPTER-3

### FEATURES OF ABSURDITY

In philosophy "*The Absurd*" refers to the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life and the human inability to find any in a purposeless, meaningless or chaotic and irrational universe. The universe and the human mind do not each separately cause the Absurd, but rather, the Absurd arises by the contradictory nature of the two existing simultaneously.

As a philosophy, absurdism further more explores the fundamental nature of the Absurd and how individuals, once becoming conscious of the absurd condition of human existence explore and search for theoretical template, with existentialism and nihilism. It has its origins in the work of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who chose to confront the crisis that humans face with the Absurd by developing his own existentialist philosophy. Absurdism is a belief system that was born of the European existentialist movement that ensued, specifically when Camus rejected certain aspects of that philosophical line of thought and published his essay "THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS". The aftermath of *World War II* provided the social environment that stimulated absurdist views and allowed for their popular development, especially in the devastated country of France.

## CHAPTER-4

### REALISM AND ABSURDITY

The characteristics of absurdism found in absurd dramas and novels usually are,

- ❖ 1)-Free floating images,
- ❖ 2)-Irrationality,
- ❖ 3)-Disorderliness,
- ❖ 4)-Illogical and incomprehensible dialogues and situation,
- ❖ 5)-Isolated and clown like character who are often disconnected dialogues,
- ❖ 6)-Meaninglessness, irrelevance, lack of trust, loss of faith, absence of human touch, purposelessness and existentialist concerns.

Absurdism is keyword, main theme and the central idea of Beckett's dramatic and fictional work. He asks very fundamental and basic question - If there is any meaning in/to our existence at all. In other words, absurdity arises from concerns of existentialism. Absurdism in dramas and novels shows cases that there is no purpose in the universe. It revolves around the idea that human life is basically meaningless and futile. Living is unbearable.

A great deal of absurdist fiction may be humorous or irrational in nature. The absurdist humor is described as a manner of comedy that relies on non-sequiturs, violation of causality, and unpredictable juxtapositions. However, the hallmark of the genre is neither comedy nor nonsense, but rather, the study of human behaviour under circumstances (whether realistic or fantastical) that appear to be purposeless and philosophically absurd. Absurdist fiction posits little judgement about characters or their actions; that task is left to the reader. Also, the "moral" of the story is generally not explicit,

and the themes or characters realizations- if any are often ambiguous in nature.

Additionally, unlike many other forms of fiction, absurdist works will not necessarily have a traditional plot structure (i.e, rising action, climax, falling action, etc). The conventional elements of fiction such as plot, characterization, and development tend to be absent. Some scholars explain that this fiction entails a "going away from" a norm. There is also the case of the questioning of the validity of human reason, from which perceptions of the natural laws arise.

The absurdist fiction also does not seek to appeal to the so-called collective unconscious as it is fiercely individualistic and almost exclusively focus on exploring an individual's or a being's subjective feelings of its existence.

## CHAPTER-5

### CONCEPT OF ABSURD IN WAITING FOR GODOT

Samuel Beckett was a critic, playwright and an author and he was born on 13 April 1906. He won the Nobel prize for literature in 1969. He was very much famous writer and especially known for his beautiful play "Waiting for Godot". It is the best example of absurd drama in 1952 and appeared on stage in 1953. He is an absurdist play writer. This play largely deals with the absurd tradition. The play is without any plot, character, dialogue, and setting in the traditional sense.

In absurd drama, nothing happens. Everything is useless and meaningless. There is a confusing situation even characters themselves do not know what they are doing and why. Characters' dialogues and conversation are totally confusing and meaningless.

This drama is a part of the theatre of absurd which discusses the idea that human life is useless, purposeless and meaningless.

"*Waiting for Godot*" is an absurdist drama and it shows the absurdity of human beings. In this play, nothing happens and no development of plot is found and there is no beginning, middle and an end. The setting of the play clearly shows the absurdity. A country road, leafless tree and two homeless men. So from the point of view of setting, it is an absurd play and no meaningful thing is present. The setting of the play reminds the post war conditions of the world which brought violence, uncertainty, despair and pessimistic outlook. These things are present in "*Waiting for Godot*".

"*Absurd*" is the type of drama which focuses on the absurdity of human existence. In this play the setting creates the absurdist mood. A desolate tree makes up the barren, otherworldly landscape. The barren, otherworldly landscape whose only occupants are two homeless men who

bumble and shuffle in a vaudevillian manner. They are in rags, bowler hats, and apparently oversized boots—a very comic introduction to a very bizarre play. There is a surplus of symbolism and thematic suggestion in this setting. The landscape is a symbol of a barren and fruitless civilization or life. There is nothing to be done and there appears to be no place better to depart. The tree, usually a symbol of life with its blossoms and fruit or its suggestion of spring, is apparently dead and lifeless. But it is also the place to which they believe this Godot has asked them to come. This could mean Godot wants the men to feel the infertility of their life. At the same time, it could simply mean they have found the wrong tree.

The setting of the play reminds us the post-war condition of the world which brought about uncertainties, despair, and new challenges to the all of mankind. A pessimistic outlook laced with sadism and tangible violence, as a rich dividend of the aftermath of wars. It is as if the poignancy and calamities of the wars found sharp reflections in Beckett's "*Waiting for Godot*".

Then next comes the plot. In the traditional sense a plot should concentrate on a single motivated action and is also expected to have a beginning a middle and a healthy tied-up ending. But it's almost impossible to provide a conventional plot summary of *Waiting for Godot*, which has often been described as a play in which nothing happens. It is formless and constructed on any structural principles. It has no Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. It starts at an arbitrarily. Beckett, like other dramatists working in this mode, is not trying to "tell a story". He's not offering any easily identifiable solutions to carefully observed problems; there's little by way of moralizing and no obvious "message". The pattern of the play might best be described as circular. The circularity of "*Waiting for Godot*" is highly unconventional.

As per as the portrayal of characters is concerned the play also fits into the absurd tradition. A well made play is expected to present characters that are well observed and convincingly motivated. But in the play we find characters who are not very recognizable human beings and don't engage themselves in a motivated action. Two tramps, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo) are waiting by a tree on a country road for Godot, whom they have never met and who may not even exist. They argue, make up, contemplate

suicide, discuss passages from the Bible, and encounter Pozzo and Lucky, a master and slave. Near the end of the first act, a young boy comes with a message from Mr. Godot that he will not come today but will come tomorrow. In the second act, the action of the first act is essentially repeated, with a few changes; the tree now has leaves; Pozzo is blind and has Lucky on a shorter leash. Once again the boy comes and tells them Mr. Godot will not come today; he insists he has never met them before.

The speech of the play begins with ESTRAGON's disgust at his work, though here his work is very absurd, "to take off his boot":

"Nothing to done."

These words symbolically shows the absurdity and meaninglessness of life which the characters will elaborate later.

In this play, Beckett presents us highly absurd situation of two tramps—Vladimir and Estragon—waiting for their appointment with the never defined Godot, who does not come. Both the tramps follow the same routine every day. They cannot wait.

Vladimir: Let's go

Estragon: Let's go

(They both don't move.)

Martin Esslin comments,

"The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting, the act of waiting is an essential aspect of human condition.

Therefore, in order to only pass time, they indulge themselves in some senseless activities, talk on and on, argue, joke, imagine themselves in different characters, rebuke, protest and question each other.

Estragon falls asleep, but Vladimir awakens him. Estragon asks Vladimir why Vladimir does not let him sleep. Vladimir replies that he was feel lonely. Estragon tells him that he had just been a dream which he would like narrate to Vladimir, but the latter is in no mood to hear Estragon's nightmares.

Estragon says that there are times when he thinks that two of them should part company. In that case, Vladimir replies, Estragon would hardly be able to look after himself alone. Estragon also feels that separation might really prove to be too bad. He then asks Vladimir if he knows the story of the Englishman in a brothel. But Vladimir is not interested in the story. Estragon asks him whether he is angry with him. He begs Vladimir's forgiveness and places his hand on Vladimir's shoulder. He then wants to embrace Vladimir, is stiff at first but he softens. They then embrace, but Estragon shrinks back saying that Vladimir stinks of garlic. Vladimir explains that he takes garlic for the sake of his kidneys:

Both of them then decide to wait for Godot. But while waiting, Estragon suggests that they can hang themselves. Vladimir asks if they should hang themselves. From a branch of a tree close by, adding that he cannot trust the branch which might break under his weight. Estragon that if he hangs himself first, Vladimir will be left alone and would feel miserable. Vladimir then suggests that they should wait and see what Godot says. Estragon replies that it would be a good idea.

Vladimir is curious to know what Godot has to offer to them because only then they would know whether to accept the offer or refuse it. Estragon wants to know what exactly Vladimir had asked Godot for. Vladimir asks Estragon if he was not probably listening to the talk. Vladimir says that they had not asked Godot for anything very definitely. Estragon thinks that what they had said to Godot was a kind of prayer, a vague supplication.

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's contradict each another.

.....

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's ask each other question.

But again they keep on waiting the whole day and find that

"Nothing happens, nobody comes.....

Nobody goes, it's awful "

Estragon's putting about with his boot is a central integration an absurdity in the play. Look at their absurd activities. (Estragon with a supreme

effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He peers inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.)  
Well?

ESTRAGON: Nothing.

The unreliability of memory is one of the reasons that waiting for Godot lacks rationale and establishes a world of absurdity and purposelessness.

ESTRAGON: What did we do yesterday?

VLADIMIR: What did we do yesterday?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: Why..... (Angrily.) Nothing is certain when you're about.

ESTRAGON: In my opinion we were here.

VLADIMIR: (looking round) you recognize the place?

ESTRAGON: I didn't say that.

Estragon can't recall his original question; the questions of the past have no meaning in the present.

Vladimir and Estragon switch rapidly from serious subject matter to absurdly inane details. This is part of the play's attempt at "tragicomedy", but this is also the reason why Vladimir and Estragon can't take part in anything meaningful: they are too distracted by the petty habits of everyday life.

VLADIMIR: I thought it was he.

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: Godot.

ESTRAGON: Pah! The wind in the reeds.

VLADIMIR: I could have sworn I heard shouts.

.....  
ESTRAGON: (Violently) I'm hungry!

VLADIMIR: Do you want a carrot?

Lack of communication!

Vladimir asks his question five times without response.

VLADIMIR:

You want to get rid of him?

The characters of the play recognize like Macbeth, though there is fundamental difference between them in their action, that life "is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing":

VLADIMIR: (sententious). To every man his little crosses. (He sighs.) Till he dies. (Afterthought.) And is forgotten.

ESTRAGON: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.

Another characteristic of absurd drama is rejection of round characters. Of the tools of absurd dramas to show meaninglessness and absurdity of human life is rejection of round characters. In the *Waiting for Godot*, there are five characters – Vladimir (Didi), Estragon (Gogo), Pozzo, Lucky, and a boy. They are not round and multidimensional. They are flat characters being the same from the beginning of the play up to the end without any change. As the play begins, we come across for absurd characters, Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, and Lucky. They are like old homosexual couples. All of them are without any purpose. In fact, the character of the play mostly shows absurdity. All of these characters are old except the boy who was the messenger of Godot. Vladimir is obsessed with his hat and Estragon with his boots. They are easily recognized however there is no information about them. They are not representative of human behaviours and it shows absurdity. Another important point about these characters showing absurdity is that all of these five characters are male characters. There is no woman character among them. According to Beckett, Mostel, & Schneider (1952), at the time of

Elizabethan period, William Shakespeare, who was the greatest dramatist of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, used to assign the women roles to the young boys due to the disallowance of women to act in the plays now-a-days. Accordingly, Samuel Beckett could choose any woman character in place of Estragon.

The another two most important characters are- Pozzo and Lucky. As they sit in relative peacefulness, consoling themselves that they are not actually tied to Godot, Pozzo and Lucky burst upon the scene. Lucky has a rope round his neck, while Pozzo drives him from behind with a whip. The tramps are first impressed by the possibility that Pozzo is Godot. When Pozzo denies it, they tell him that they are waiting for Godot. After remonstrating with them that they are trespassing on his land, Pozzo settles down to eat. Though the tramps are trespassing on his land, Pozzo settles down to eat. Though the tramps are inferior human beings, Pozzo intend to spend sometimes with them.

Vladimir is appalled by Pozzo's treatment of Lucky. But Pozzo, having calmly enjoyed his pipe and sprayed his throat, explains that Lucky wants to stay with him. In any case, Pozzo elaborates in response to Lucky's tears that the sorrows of mankind always exist.

The conversation lags somewhat, until Pozzo undertakes to explain to his friends "what our twilights can do". This has ominous overtones, for "behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging". Having concluded his burst of lyricism, Pozzo agrees to have Lucky dance for their entertainment. The performance is mere clumsy, shuffling. Estragon describes it as "The Scapegoat's Agony", while Vladimir describes it as "The Hard Stool". Pozzo, however, explains that Lucky's dancing should be described as "The Net" because, while dancing, Lucky thinks that he is entangled to a net.

This prompts the decision to have Lucky think. The result is a long, incoherent and disconnected monologue: Let us assume the existence of a personal God who loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown, but time will tell. This God suffers with those who (for "reasons unknown", "but time will tell" - the phrase, which recur like a motif throughout Lucky's speech) are plunged in torment. As a result of the labours left unfinished of certain scholars, it is established beyond all doubt that man is seen to waste

and pine in spite of the strides of physical culture and the practice of sports, and that man dwindles and shrinks. In the light of the labours lost of certain other scholars, it is found that the skull shrinks and wastes. The implication of Lucky's tirade seems to be: In spite of the existence of a loving God, man, for all his advances and progress, is seen to be dwindling and pining.

The trade is only stooped when Lucky is overcome physically by Estragon, Vladimir and Pozzo. After protracted adieu, Pozzo leaves, driving Lucky before him.

In fact, they always seek ways to amuse themselves in the play in order to alleviate the pain of waiting and possibly to stop themselves from thinking or contemplating too deeply. Although the act of waiting seems hopeless in the case of Estragon and Vladimir, they are redeemed by their tireless commitment. Their only concern is passing the time. They engage themselves in several rituals in order to combat the silence and emptiness of a meaningless existence (Opppapers editors, 2011). Quest for identity is another important factor in absurd dramas. The characters are yearning for identity. They are nothing in themselves. In the waiting for Godot, the characters have no identity as individuals; they do not know who they are? What was their past? What is the present or what will be the future? They are non-identities. They are nothing more than men.

"Pozzo who are you?"

Vladimir: "We are men" (Beckett, Mostel, & Schnieder, 1952).

The final characteristic of absurd drama seen in the *Waiting for Godot* is the clash between good and evil. Being a post-war play, the themes of menace, exploitation, and the clash between good and evil are very dominant. In the *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo is the one who assaults and exploits his servant Lucky.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett builds his themes through the minimalist setting and the characters' absurd conversations and actions demonstrate larger truths about the human condition.

One of the most noticeable features of the play is utter absurdity; Vladimir and Estragon dress shabbily and engage in physically inept actions, and

partake in clownish nonsensical conversations. They absurdly wait endlessly for an unchanging situation to change when it is clear Godot will never come. They occasionally discuss ending their wait by hanging themselves or simply leaving, but absurdly, they never take any action. Although they argue there is "nothing to be done," they work absurdly hard to fill the time while they wait. The unavoidable conclusion is that human existence itself is absurd. Beckett's emphasis on the absurdity of human behaviour shows both the tragic and comedic sides of the existential crises.

None of the characters in *Waiting for Godot* has a meaningful purpose. *Waiting for Godot* might seem to give Vladimir and Estragon a purpose, but the fact that Godot never arrives renders their waiting meaningless. Likewise, Pozzo and Lucky might seem to be travelling toward something, but their travels are ultimately shown to be equally purposeless. Pozzo initially professes to be taking Lucky to the fair to sell him, but this purpose is never fulfilled. The second time they pass by, they express no purpose at all. They are simply moving from one place to another. Their travelling may even be counter-productive because they cannot seem to go any distance without falling down.

The messages from Godot delivered by the boy are equally purposeless. Godot will never come, and it is not at all clear the messages are even meant for Vladimir "Albert". All the characters seem to be trapped in their purposeless roles by little more than habit, which Vladimir calls "a great deadener". The idea that life has no purpose is a recurring theme in the Theatre of the Absurd which *Waiting for Godot* helped define.

Although it is unclear who or what Godot represents, by *Waiting for him*, Vladimir and Estragon are clearly seeking some type of meaning outside themselves. In act 1, they remember making a "kind of prayer" to Godot, expecting it to give them some direction and they decide it is safer to wait and see what Godot says rather than die by hanging themselves. Godot, however, never comes, representing the futility and folly of such a search for meaning in an inherently meaningless existence.

Time is a slippery thing in *Waiting for Godot*. It seems to pass normally during the period the characters are on the stage, with predictable milestones, such as the sunset and moonrise, although the characters are sometimes

confused about it. But the intervals between the two acts and various events are wildly uncertain. When Vladimir and Estragon return at the beginning of Act 2, the growth of leaves on the tree suggest a longer period of time has passed than the one day Vladimir claims it has been. Estragon and Pozzo retain little or no memory of their encounter the "previous" day, and other changes have mysteriously occurred "overnight". Estragon and Vladimir have no firm idea of how long they have been together or how long ago they did other things, such as climb the Eiffel Tower or pick grapes in Macon country.

The characters also seem to be trapped by time, endlessly repeating essentially the same day again and again. This creates a despair that leads them to repeatedly contemplate suicide, although they never remember to bring the rope they would need to actually hang themselves. Time is the one of the main ways people recognize their lives and memories, so the uncertainty of time in the play contributes to the feeling of meaninglessness.

In the play "*Waiting for Godot*" many times, a possibility is suggested them immediately undercut by its unhappy opposite. This technique is used by Beckett to relay his theme that life is uncertain and unpredictable at its best, unfortunate and unending at its worst. To further states this theme, Estragon asserts that "There's no lack of void" in life. It is actually of little importance where they were the previous day, as everywhere everyday the same empty vacuum envelops them. Absence, emptiness, nothingness, and unresolved mysteries are central features in the play.

In this way we can say the play "*Waiting for Godot*" contains almost all the elements of a absurd play. The play depicts the irrationalism of life in a grotesquely comic and non-consequential fashion with the element of "metaphysical alienation and tragic anguish". It was first written in French and called *En Attendant Godot*. The author himself translated the play into English in 1954. The uniqueness of the play compelled the audiences to flock to the theatres for a spectacularly continuous four hundred performances. At the time, there were two distinct opinions about the play; some called it a hoax and others called it a masterpiece. Nevertheless, "*Waiting for Godot*" has claimed its place in literary history as a masterpiece that changed the face of twentieth century drama.

## CONCLUSION

The play *Waiting for Godot* written by Samuel Beckett in 1945 is known to be the symbol of absurd dramas. Absurd means out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, and illogical. This statement indicates that absurd deals with something which is out of harmony, out of context and beyond the limit. It was grown out of the sense of despair, futility, and meaninglessness, where in which man's existence is a dilemma of purposeless, meaningless, and point less activity. It is the complete denial of age-old values. It has no plot, no characterization, no logical sequence, and no culmination or climax. It shows that how man has lost his dignity and conventions. Absurd uses unconventional perspectives which can lead to nowhere and meaninglessness. Every single in absurd is illogical and unreasonable, so it will always have a big question mark for the readers trying to interpret it.

*Waiting for Godot* is a play which evokes much criticism and interpretation due to its unconventional style and characteristics which serves absurdity. As exemplified and illustrational in this paper, *Waiting for Godot* is considered as the violation of the conventions of realism in drama because of refusing to create the image of human beings who act plausibly in familiar scenes within the appropriate plot and chronological time. Generally speaking, we can claim that this play serves absurdity within its theme, plot, characterization, setting, and dialogues throughout the play. Specifically speaking, *Waiting for Godot* is abundant with the elements of the absurd theatre such as illogicalness, conflict less, self-enclosed and abnormal setting, cyclical plot structure, uncertain arrangement of events rejection of round characters, distrust of language as a means of communication and inability to communicate, emphasis on situations rather than events, quest for identity, unresolved mysteries hopeless characters forced to do repetitive or

meaningless actions, dehumanization of the individual, use of humor, and clash between good and evil. In fact, *Waiting for Godot* sets people thinking. However, on the surface level, it looks like banal, when we think deeply about our life, it seems philosophical. The very first sentence of the play which opens with Estragon's idea "Nothing to be done" shows man is helpless, useless, and meaningless but the next sentence of Vladimir "I' beginning to come round to that opinion" gives us motivation to restart our life. It shows that in this contemporary modern world, we are artificially superman but naturally mere puppets in the hands of destiny and absurdity. In other way, this play represents the man's helplessness on this barren Earth because it is said that the paths of glory lead to death. We are merely born on this Earth to have a journey up to death. What matters in between is just passing of the time. We are the travellers of this Earth. In other words, in this contemporary period, people do not have any ideals before them to home they can surrender their life and go on living with relaxation. We cannot imitate anybody's ideals which is either too high or too below of the capacity of human beings. Therefore, man should try to identify his or her capacities and go on living. That is the only truth suggested by the play.

Thus the play *Waiting for Godot* contains almost all the elements of a absurd play. The play depicts the irrationalism of life in a grotesquely comic and non-consequential fashion with element "metaphysical alienation and tragic anguish." It was first written in French and called *En Attendant Godot*. The author himself translated the play into English in 1945. The uniqueness of the play compelled the audiences to flock to the theatres for a spectacularly continuous four hundred performances. At the time, there were two distinct opinions about the play; some called it a hoax and others called it a masterpiece. Nevertheless, *Waiting for Godot* has claimed its place in literary history as a masterpiece that changed the face of twentieth century drama.

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A PROJECT REPORT ON "CONCEPT OF ABSURDITY IN WAITING FOR GODOT"

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

PATTAMUNDI COLLEGE, PATTAMUNDI, KENDRAPARA, ODISHA

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