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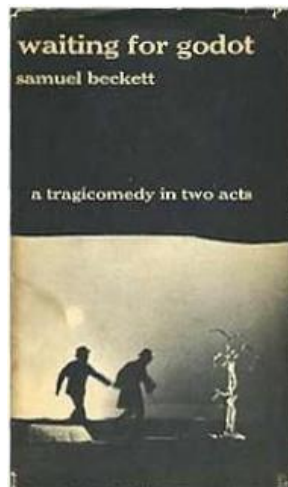
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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The Concept of Nihilism and Torment in Samuel Barclay Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

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Introduction

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The Concept of Nihilism and Torment in Samuel Barclay Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Nihilism, suggesting the theoretical doctrine of extreme pessimism toward the intrinsic fundamentals of human life, and, in contrast, idealism, advocating the philosophical canons of belief in a structured transcendental realm, are the two paradoxical dominating themes in Irish avant-garde dramatist Samuel Barclay Beckett's famous absurd play *Waiting for Godot*. These two issues are responsible for the suffrage of mind. The major characters especially the megalomaniac Vladimir and less-intelligent Estragon who are waiting for unidentified Godot, demonstrate the clash of these two theories through epistemological, ontological and poetic form.

Keywords: Nihilism, frustration, time, waiting, hope, optimism, pessimism, suicide, society.

Analyses

Nihilism

The word 'Nihilism' derives from the Latin '*nihil*', or nothing, which means the sense of instability of the achieved things in this earthly world that highlights the believe that something does not exist. It appears in the verb "annihilate," meaning to bring to nothing and to destroy completely. Early in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Jacobi used the word to negatively characterize transcendental idealism. It only became popularized, however, after its appearance in Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) where he uses "nihilism" to describe the crude scientism espoused by his character Bazarov who preaches a creed of total negation.

Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A nihilist believes in nothingness, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy. This term is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who says that its harsh effects eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history. In the 20th century, nihilistic themes—epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers. The existentialists helped popularize tenets of nihilism in their attempts to blunt its destructive potential. By the end of the century, existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with antifoundationalism, loneliness, self-hatred and isolation.

According to Nietzsche, there is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it. Penetrating the façades buttressing convictions, the nihilist discovers that all values are baseless and that reason is impotent. For him, nihilism requires a radical repudiation of all imposed values and meaning to be perished and it is a matter highly concerned with self-destruction. The caustic strength of nihilism is absolute, Nietzsche argues, and under its withering scrutiny *the highest values devalue themselves*. The aim is always lacking, and the question ‘Why’ finds no answer. Inevitably, nihilism will expose all cherished beliefs and sacrosanct truths as symptoms of a defective Western mythos. This collapse of meaning, relevance, and purpose will be the most destructive force in history, constituting a total assault on reality and nothing less than the greatest crisis of humanity. Such a subjective furore becomes stern in the mind of nihilists. He further says:

Nihilism, however, is to be treated as a pathological transitional stage: we move from one extreme position (nature and the world have a meaning and a purpose) to another extreme position (all is devoid of meaning and purpose). If nihilism comes to us now as an uncanny guest it is not because the unpleasant character of existence is any greater than before, but simply because we are now mistrustful of any meaning in existence and everything appears to us to be in vain (In Pearson, 2005, p.101)

These issues have been marked and depicted in the various characters of literature. Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is not deprived of representing the crucial issues of nihilism. The protagonists, Vladimir and Estragon, depict Nietzsche’s concept of nihilism to some extent. They suffer from loneliness, attempt suicide, evoke pessimism and remain unpredictable and dissatisfied till the end of the play. The reason behind such attributes is the prolong torment of waiting for an unidentified and unpredictable entity Godot who is supposed to be the saviour of all ills.

Samuel Beckett and *Waiting for Godot*

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born in 13 April 1906 and died in 22 December 1989. He is known as an Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, theatre director, and poet. Beckett is widely regarded as among the most influential writers of the 20th century. He is considered one of the last modernists. As an inspiration to many later writers, he is also sometimes considered one of the first postmodernists. He is one of the key writers in what Martin Esslin

called the "Theatre of the Absurd" and *Waiting for Godot* is his masterpiece. Beckett was awarded the 1969 Nobel Prize in Literature and was elected Saoi of Aosdána in 1984. His work provides a bleak, tragicomic outlook on human nature with black comedy and gallows humour.

Waiting for Godot, Beckett's first play, was written originally in French in 1948 and later he translated the play into English himself. It premiered at a tiny theater in Paris in 1953. This play began Beckett's association with the Theatre of the Absurd, which influenced later playwrights like Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard. *Waiting for Godot* is generally an absurdist play in which two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wait endlessly and in vain for the arrival of Godot, an unidentified personality. Godot's absence and the characters' waiting have led to many different interpretations since the play's 1953 premiere. It was voted "the most significant English language play of the 20th century". The play highlights the crucial features of postmodernism through its themes and characterizations. Specially the second act of the play is highly appreciated by many critics, for example Duckworth says comparing Ionesco's writings with Beckett (1972) :

...Human solidarity and mutual help, so beautifully parodied in the second act of *Waiting for Godot*, are nothing so pretentious as an ideal for Beckett, but he does recognise them as a basic need of our mutual dependence. Ionesco's fear of massification, on the other hand, leads him to stress a more strongly marked dicotomy between the individual and soceity. Hence, Beckett seems a more compassionate writer than Ionesco...Beckett's work is as self-centered as Ionesco's. But it is less egocentric. If he is a sounding board for suffering, it is not just his own suffering. He paints a picture, not recognised by all but responded to by most, of man in solitude imprisoned within the time and space of a silent and unresponsive universe. Only the very brash or complacent can fail to react to that. (In Pattie, p.141)

Thus, it turns clear that Beckett's writings offer the essential features of existentialism but the the end of his works does not establish that, rather, it provides a solution by giving a light of optimism directly or indirectly. The concept of nihilism also deals with the same patterns of presentations. Nihilism the the sense of nothingness where a glimpse of hope arrives unpredictably and again turns invisible which makes the individuals suffer from the

sense of loss. Therefore, Beckett's play serves as a good example of the ideas of nihilist features in human characters. The play is done in such a manner that it can be interpreted by comparing it to different literary works. Mathew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' also offers some of the issues related to Nietzsche's ideas of nihilism that makes a link of the work with *Waiting for Godot*.

'Dover Beach' and *Waiting for Godot*

'Dover Beach' is a short poem by Mathew Arnold. It was published in 1867 in the collection *New Poems*. The poem starts with a quiet scene where a couple looks out on the moonlit water of the English Channel, and listens to the sound of the waves. Then the historical imagery of the ancient Greece is shown as a metaphor for human history. The gradual, steady loss of faith in culture and human civilization are described. The poem ends on a gorgeous, heartbreaking note, with the couple clinging to their love in a world of violence and fear and pain. The poem also highlights sense of pessimism and existentialist ideas which every man in this world experience. This idea can be linked with *Waiting for Godot*.

Nihilistic Philosophy in *Waiting for Godot*

The play, *Waiting for Godot*, begins with the supporting of the nihilistic philosophy "Nothing to be done" (1:1), repeatedly uttered by the two characters who are deciding to commit suicide, emphasizing the fact that time is a sort of torture and life is a kind of burden for human beings. Such individuals believe that coming to this earth was the outcome of a punishment, according to the Original sin. So life is not a gift and death is a relief from tormenting life. There is no denying of the fact that their decision of committing suicide is a sad example of nihilism but their ultimate decision of surmounting the self-destroying idea shows the light of idealism. In the play, we find the reference of *The Bible*, the story of the thieves in the Gospels, the mention of Abel and Cain and especially the reference of sea: "Sea was pale blue, The very look of it made/ me thirsty" (1: 104-106) by existentialist Vladimir which is akin to Mathew Arnold's view of the world as a "darling plain" in 'Dover Beach': 'The sea of faith/Was once too at its full ...I only hear /Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar' (Arnold, line: 21-25).

Metaphoric Imagery

This imagery of sea is metaphoric that also resembles the never-ending waiting of the characters. As the sea is deep, prolong and mysteries, Vladimir and Estragon's waiting for Godot is also intense, prolong and full of uncertainties. Regarding Godot and the concept of waiting and hope, John Pilling says ;

The characters are consequently engaged in a perpetual act of waiting. Much has been written about who or what Godot is. my own view is that he is simultaneously whatever we think he is and not what we think he is: he is an absence, who can be interpreted at moments as God, death, the lord of the manor, a benefactor, even Pozzo, but Godot has a function rather than a meaning. He stands for what keeps us chained to and in existence, he is the unknowable that represents hope in an age when there is no hope, he is whatever fiction we want him to be – as long as he justifies your life-as-waiting. (1994, p.71)

Evoking Hope Even in the Depth of Hopelessness

Therefore, it can be estimated that *Waiting for Godot* is not only a play depicting nihilism and subjective sufferings but also a discourse of man's attempt of evoking hope even in the depth of hopelessness. Vladimir and Estragon plans to commit suicide several times but ultimately drops the decision of self-destruction only in the hope of Godot's arrival. This indicates the essential feature of human beings of cultivating hope to proceed with the toils of life. Both the characters continue to suffer instead of submitting to the situations. On the other hand, sea metaphorically resembles idealism and the water is supposed to be the prime element of cleaning the dirt of sin. Water is also metaphorically symbolizes redemption and purification.

These ideas are associated to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* where the protagonist, medical scholar Doctor Faustus, kills himself as a means of submission to the devils instead of coping or struggling with the situations and urges the holy water of Christ for redemption which he fails to gain.

Doctor Faustus and Waiting for Godot

Doctor Faustus is a play by Christopher Marlowe. It is the story of a scholar who sells his soul to the devil for power and knowledge. *Doctor Faustus* was first published in 1604, eleven years after Marlowe's death and at least twelve years after the first performance of the play. The idea of nihilism, existentialism, torments of waiting depicted in the play can be linked with *Waiting for Godot*. It can be said that Godot is not a personality but the subjective urge which every man dreams and strives to achieve. This Godot to Doctor Faustus is the power to rule the world and the knowledge of the ultimate truth. This Godot to Doctor Faustus is the urge for a single moment of life from the upcoming death or a chance to seek forgiveness to the Almighty for spiritual peace. Therefore, Godot is not a personality but the expectations which differs from person to person.

On the other hand, Iconoclast Vladimir and dull Estragon live in solitary darkness deprived of faith and happiness waiting for the mysterious Godot, the spiritual safe-guard, who hardly comes. But their expectation that Godot, their magical medicine of woe, will come suddenly and will liberate them from their misery marks the light of idealism. We find an excellent similarity to that of Doctor Faustus who seeks Christ's blood to evade his ultimate damnation in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Even xenophobic Pozzo, the owner of social-pariah Lucky, says, "You are human beings none the less ... Of the same species as/Pozzo! Made in god's image" (1:505).

Litany of Human Nihilism

In true sense of the term, Pozzo is illustrating the litany of human nihilism by equalizing all men together in terms of idiosyncrasy and visualizes human being as God's image as if they are the boon-son creations, thus showing the conflict between nihilism and idealism. Vladimir's speech "That means nothing. I too pretended not/ to recognize them. And then nobody ever/recognizes us" supports the idea of identity crisis, one of the prime features of nihilism, which is very much akin to the idea of Albert Camus - "In a universe that's suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile...This divorce between man and his life, actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity." Estragon's speech "All my life I've compared myself to him" (1:1539) echoes the odor of atheism, another feature of nihilism, implanting the idea that God is hostile and tries to increase men's struggle in this topsy-turvy world. Such atheists, supporting the

stygian idea of Humanism, believe that men are plaything in God' hand for His delights Who interferes in men's life to make it more challenging though man is the successive measure of all things. Making inconsistent pauses, Estragon says, "All my lousy life I've/ crawled about in the mud! And you talk to/ me about scenery!"(act-2), and Vladimir says "Your only hope left is to/disappear" (act-2), that mark communication gap between them, bite dust promises, inevitability of death, despair, anguish and existential crises which are the features of nihilism. Regarding such notions, Gordon says:

Waiting for Godot portrays both the need for purpose and the emotional fragmentation that accompanies the struggle for this anchoring of self. Vladimir and Estragon have inherited a world they cannot master, and despite their heroic accommodations they cannot escape the turmoil that accompanies their sense of purposelessness. It is as though an unfathomable anarchy had been loosed upon their inner world. Most of their efforts towards filling this emptiness reinforce their loss of energy and indecision and increase the disjuncture between their thoughts and actions. In reality, they are capable of participating only in temporarily meaningful action and fragmented communication. And they know this. (2002, p.56)

Doing Things Intentionally

Therefore, it can be assumed that nihilists do things intentionally and this sense of knowledge made them frustration as they know that they are destroying themselves. In case of Doctor Faustus, he practiced the black magic knowing its harmful effects and signed the bond willingly to Mephistopheles. Later, he is shown regretting for himself. Likewise, Vladimir and Estragon willingly wait for Godot knowing the uncertainty of his coming and several times regret their decision. Their regrets make them nihilists and the sudden arrival of hope and its sudden disillusionment also trigger their sense of nihilism. Similar concept of frustration is also viewed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where the protagonists find no solution to the imperialist attempts of Europe to the Asian continents.

Heart of Darkness and Waiting for Godot

Heart of Darkness is a novella written by Joseph Conrad, The story depicts Charles Marlow's life as an ivory transporter down the Congo River in Central Africa. In the course of

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his travel in central Africa, Marlow becomes obsessed with Mr. Kurtz and marks the harsh impact of global orientalism and imperialism. The subjective suffering of Marlow and Kurtz as nihilists associates them with the characters in *Waiting for Godot*.

There is no denying that as post-modern representatives, the characters of Beckett, suffer from the stygian part of human existence imbued with the shadows of idiopathic frivolity, meaninglessness and nothingness. To harp on the same tune, we can say that the two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, view life as Charlie Marlow views: “life is...that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself- that comes too late- a crop of unextinguished regret”. (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*). The core of the matter is their deprivation from the roots of idealism and fall into the pit of nihilism as Eugene Ionesco says when people intentionally get cut off from their religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, they became lost and all their actions become senseless, absurd, useless as well as the constant feeling of regret hounds them psychologically.

As Gordon marks,

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change in itself is an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless, and therefore null and void. The more things change, the more they are the same. That is the terrible stability of the world. (2002, p.67)

This idea is linked with the feeling of nihilism. The act of prolong waiting evokes the dual sense of optimism and pessimism. It is obvious that pessimism triumphs easily when the experience of waiting is deprived of pleasure and entertainment. The subjective furore of getting nothing at the end and the frailty of any heroic action, both subjective and objective, fuels the sense of nihilism. This happens to Kurtz, Marlow and Vladimir.

The Waste Land and Waiting for Godot

The Waste Land is a long poem written by T.S. Eliot. It is widely regarded as a central text in Modernist poetry. Published in 1922, the 434-line-poem first appeared in the U.K. in the October issue of *The Criterion* and in the U.S. in the November issue of *The Dial*.

It was published in book form in December 1922. The concept of uncertainty, depression and phobia depicted in the poem can be linked with the themes of *Waiting for Godot*. The psychological dilemmas of Vladimir and Estragon echo the same issue of frustration depicted in the poem. As *The Waste Land* suggests a glimpse of hope for a better future at the end of the poem, Beckett's characters also shows similar issues of hope.

We, at the end of the play, find that the characters are waiting for Godot which marks the spark of optimism, a feature of idealism. They are not committing suicide because of the hope that Godot may come at anytime and can rescue them from all misfortunes, which is similar to that of T. S. Eliot's view in *The Waste Land*: "Datta. Dayadhama. Damiyata/Shantih shantih shantih"(433-434). Idealism declares hope in darkness of life, God's presence for help and affirmative ways of eradicating the travesty of human life. There is no direct indication to the fact that the characters follow idealism but their ardent waiting for Godot provides an aura of idealistic implication in reader's sub-conscious minds. It seems that the characters unconsciously believe that nihilistic views cannot suggest them solution; rather the path of idealism can confirm them progressive aurora. Idealism does not believe that life is full of infinite absurdities and shocks rather a golden chance where every human being can germinate their best qualities. Today's post modern world is like a dungeon of dystopia for dismantling the litany of idealism, the glorified safe-guard of human conscience. The intellectual pleasure of idealism is the solution to open the optimistic aspects, emotional apotheosis, philanthropic zeal and the quintessential reality of life against the sinister shadow of nihilism and Godot is the center of idealism of hope for the characters in *Waiting for Godot*.

As marked in Beckett's words:

...you must go on, I cant go on, you must go on, I 'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps its done already, perhaps they had said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I cant go on, I'll go on. (1997, p.401)

On the other hand, we can say that the way of God is reexamined with the concept of Godot's existence, the common traits of life are revalued, and the conventional paths of

thinking, philosophical values, morality, and ethics are justified by Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*. The title itself holds the perplexing and confusing tone of post-modernity because the term 'Godot' does not signify any fixed meaning, object, value, entity or person. What Godot is--it could be anything, as well as, it could be nothing. It may signify God, a prophet, desired object, freedom, death, time, end of universe or anything that we willfully desire or does not desire in our earthen life. Audience can never ensure the identity of Godot, can never learn who Godot is. As a proper noun, the name "Godot" may derive from any number of French verbs, and Beckett stated it might be a derivative of *godillot*, a French slang for "boot". The title, in this interpretation, could be seen as suggesting that the characters are "waiting for the boot". The name also forms a pun on the Irish phrase "go deo" meaning "eternity."

Another interpretation is that Godot is simply God. The characters wait for god, receiving messages from a middle man (The church or bible), and God never comes. Whatever it is, the idea of 'Godot' is juxtaposed with the idea of waiting, that means, we must wait for this Godot, we should sit for the coming of Godot, we must not leave the place, because Godot may come, we must obey the order that we have to wait for someone or none. Godot is someone who never comes. Lucky and Pozzo could be Godot, if they did not come. Primary confusion of Estragon and Vladimir regarding the identity of Lucky and Pozzo signifies the criterion of Godot, and the latent message is Godot is someone to be waited for, not someone who comes, who is reachable and reasonable, who is familiar to us. The conspicuous feature of Godot is that Godot is desired, Whether we like it or not, whether we want it or not, whether it comes or not, whether we expects it or not, we should wait for it, we must want it and feel a desire for it, and we must learn to wait for this Godot.

The Theme of Waiting

The "Theme of Waiting" juxtaposes some successive questions in *Waiting for Godot*. What is waiting, why should we wait, what for we are waiting, when the waiting will end, who is coming to end the waiting, how the waiting will come to an end, what we will do during our waiting, why we have no power to end this waiting, who asked us to wait--all these basic questions are raised in the play, and 'waiting' appears to be a central theme of the play. Beckett told the painful saga of perpetual waiting and the saddening, disheartening edge of fancy dreaming of the end of this waiting; but his play contains an

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untold suggestion that "no suggestion is there". *Silence motif* is repeatedly used in the play, and it suggests the lack of expression, the lack of manifestation in the way of waiting. When we know that nothing can be said, nothing to be known, and nothing to get out of this world, silence comes painfully. The monosyllabic words of the characters, their baby-like gestures, their inconsistency and their waiting --all these events indicate towards the agonized effects of perpetual waiting.

Waiting is painful. It hurts. Time is greatest tormentor, and we can not renounce the negative facets of time. In Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress", "idea of tormentor time" is presented :

"But at my back I always hear

Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near

And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast eternity " (*Literature for Writing*, 506)

Beckett deals with this tormenting, torturous time; nothingness, and this hollowness of life is illustrated with painful tell of two tramps who have nothing to do, to say, to show or to get, but to wait for an airy Godot. Beckett says there is a ditch over there, but he does not suggest that we can stay outside the ditch, wherever we live, even if we stay over the mound, it makes no difference that we have to stay in a hollow ditch that encircles us with its airy depthless. What we can do at best is to know the painful fact of life that Godot never comes, and we are perpetually and eternally entrapped here, in this ditch, to stay, to remain and to wait for someone who never feels a need to come, though there is no essential sign or prove that someone is there or we are ordered to do so.

We can break away the circle, we can get out of the ditch, and we can cease the unbearable presence of waiting. But can we really? We are trapped. We are trapped to see our own doom, our own failure, our projected downfall. Most interestingly, waiting is signified also with a stronger theme of immobility. We can not go, we can not move. Gogo and Didi never move. They always stick to the place with the dimmed hope that Godot may come. Here a suggestion overwhelms that we are trapped in such a way that we can never go out of this hollow ditch. Knowingly or unknowingly we have to stay and to wait for creeping death. Vladimir and Estragon want to commit suicide, but they fail. Estragon's

clothing goes down when he profoundly and seriously thinks about a suicidal attempt. It is ridiculous, and noteworthy. These ridiculous aspects of life, the mockery of life, the absurdity of human life are projected along with the Estragon and Vladimir's waiting. What for we are waiting, Beckett raises this question and suggests that life is a joke, a great joke, where we have nothing to but to wait for nothing. Here, to pass the time gets the ultimate priority of life rather than other significant facets of life.

ESTRAGON Let's go.

VLADIMIR We can't.

ESTRAGON Why not?

VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot. (*Waiting for Godot*, Act I, 44)

We are living in a material world having some material desire along with our material body. We can not ignore the material world or the materialized immateriality. God is something immaterial, but to us, we can only understand the existence of God in the context of material. So we say God is someone who created both--material and immaterial. If Godot is considered to be an immaterial existence, Godot will never come and can never come to this material world. Lucky and Pozzo are a part of this material world, because they are touchable and reachable; but if they do not come, they would have been considered and worshipped as Godot, an immaterial and non-existent entity. In every moment of our life, we are facing our Godots, but the waiting never ends because we can never touch the locus or the periphery of immaterial. So waiting seems ridiculous, because if Godot comes, we will fail to recognize due to our preoccupations of materiality.

Waiting: A Question and a Reason of Torment

Why waiting is in question? Form the very beginning of the civilization, mankind has learnt to wait for golden days of future, to create Utopia for all; but in 20th century, this waiting is in question because of the wars, catastrophic destruction and downfall of human values built upon the ideologies of “European Enlightenment”. Picasso’s Guernica truthfully has been memorialized the tragedy of human civilization. The shattered human bodies, the fanatics, the screams, death and destruction of the illustration are not only a truthful account of the destroyed Spanish city (in Spanish Civil War, between 1936-39), but also of the whole mankind. The inner cruelties of human mind, the lack of human

values, hypocrisy, contradictions, and evil of inside—all these issues are projected in the picture; thus it points out towards a newer truth of life that nothing is true, nothing could be true. Man evolved from a mere hairy ape and performed his success by building a civilization full of dazzling pompousness, great technological developments, better way of life, newer ways of happiness and more; but all these efforts are now in question due to the devastating fall down of human civilization in WWI and WWII. Beckett portrays this painful account of human hope, the shattered high expectations of human civilization in his play by putting the image of waiting. Nothing happens, because it is our inward cruelties of life that we are not able to take the changes to come, we are pervert, debased and dehumanized in such a extent that the golden days can never come. Utopian vision of human mind will never end because of our failures. We have created a civilization, but we are also the demolisher of our own homeland, Frankenstein of our own will.

Sartre, an explicitly atheistic and pessimistic philosopher, also declared that human beings require a rational basis for their lives but are unable to achieve one, and thus human life is a “futile passion.” Sartre’s existentialism is a form of humanism, and he strongly emphasized human freedom, choice, and responsibility. He eventually tried to reconcile these existentialist concepts with a Marxist analysis of society and history. In the treatise *Being and Nothingness*, French writer Jean-Paul Sartre presents his existential philosophical framework. He reasons that the essential nothingness of human existence leaves individuals to take sole responsibility for their own actions. Shunning the morality and constraints of society, individuals must embrace personal responsibility to craft a world for themselves. Along with focusing on the importance of exercising individual responsibility, Sartre stresses that the understanding of freedom of choice is the only means of authenticating human existence.

Beckett also deals with these ideas when he placed the concept of ‘mistaken identity, place and time’. We are living in a world that is full of hollowness, cruelty, rudeness, repetition, monotony, mistrust, misconception, misunderstanding, misleading beliefs, misjudgment, mismatched procedures of life and maladjustment. Thus, in Beckett and Sartre, life is confusing, chaotic, cripple and full of dull connotations and contradictions. For these reasons, in Beckettian writing we can trace the charismatic manifestation of waiting, every character of the play wait for something to happen, something to come, something to be gone; but nothing happens, none comes and nothing is

explored. It suggests existential feeling of human life that life is nothing but a monotonous waiting for nothing. As we can see, Vladimir and Estragon are trapped in a painful, void-like existence in which suffering is commonplace and death (comparable to escape perhaps?) an impossibility:

Estragon: Why don't we hang ourselves?

Vladimir: With what?

Estragon: You haven't got a bit of rope?

Vladimir: No.

Estragon: Then we can't. (*Waiting for Godot*, Act II, 123)

If you live in life, then you die in life, too. And, in the same way, the pain of living is equated with the pain of dying, as we can observe it in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale":

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan; (Literature for Writing, 598)

The inaction, naivety, death, decay, stagnant and deceased life is portrayed in these lines; and we can certainly notice the Beckettian tone of the poem that we are left to a rude, filthy, decaying world and we can move nowhere, we can go nowhere, but we have to wait and to embrace death and its consequences. We should wait, we must wait, we must learn to wait, we have to know how to wait and we cannot but wait to live the life though it is painful. Like Beckettian life, this inadequacy never ends and is interminable pain and suffering. Yet these suffering characters go on enduring the unbearable.

They keep going on for two reasons: one is time, which is forever shifting them towards something that they will never achieve; the other is because they must go on, regardless. Since Time is two dimensional, it can only push its recipient on, whether wanted or not ("time devours on) The further we go in life towards death, argues Beckett, the more we are guilty of the sinful act of living a deathly and deadened existence, **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:2 February 2014
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artificially sweetened by relative pleasures which are not really pleasures at all. Life is habitual, and “habit is a great deadener”. With regards to ‘going on’, it is clear in Beckett’s literature that his characters have no alternative but to ‘go on’. They are driven forward in a torturous existence for no other reason than that they have no alternative but to do as the author decrees ‘death in life, and life in death’. We all fail in life, yet despite the fact that Beckett offers no hope of release from this everlasting torture, perhaps we can look for some kind of salvation.

Conclusion

Waiting for Godot is a quintessential masterpiece of postmodern literature as it depicts the psychological exposure of postmodern individual. The crucial features of subjective furors of men are explicitly delivered in the art of dramatization. Time is a crucial factor in everyone’s life and it is also one of the effective means of subjective torment. The concept of Godot is a hypothetical concern because it has different definition to different people. For example, Godot is the result of an important examination for a student, it is the expected profit of an finance invested businessman, it is the medicine of a patient who is suffering from a painful disease and so on. Literature is a social mirror and it represents the social conditions with the colors of imagination. Various works of literature serve as a displayer of effective matters in human lives and Beckett is one of the most distinguished and successful contributors in this respect.

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