



Significance Of Waiting In Samuel Beckett's, Waiting For Godot

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Abstract: The play, waiting for Godot, is mostly center around the theme of waiting, made by two tramps Vladimir and Estragon for a strange entity, Godot. The use of symbolism, austere stage setting, directionless speech, tramps as central characters and their relentless waiting are all measured through the various lences in this current paper. Besides the central theme of the play, which is waiting is also analyzed under the aegis of various themes. Waiting itself carries several Samuel Beckett's play, waiting for Godot revolves round the multiple themes like nihilism, absurdism and existentialism. But the primary factor meanings in the life of the central characters in the play but also to their audience accordingly. Waiting itself has a greater meaning in the play, Waiting for Godot. In the play waiting signifies nothingness, futility and void of meaning. On the other hand, waiting also represent hope, aspirations and never give up attitude towards life.

Keywords: Nihilism, waiting, existentialism, postwar, disillusionment

Introduction: What is the meaning of life? What do we expect in life? What we all waiting for and why? These questions are the prime factors that bother us from the beginning to the end of life. The play Waiting for Godot written by Samuel Beckett is originally a French publication in 1955 and republished in English the next year, 1956. In the play, we see the two protagonists, the tramps, Vladimir and Estragon both are waiting for Godot (not specified the identity of this character). Not even for a single moment, the play revealed what exactly the tramps expect from Godot. Neither we come to know if Godot has any power to accomplish the wishes or expectations nor the meaning of waiting made by two tramps. Nevertheless, waiting for Godot is based on the theme of waiting. Waiting for something which is unknown, purposeless, devoid of any concrete meaning.

As an absurd play, waiting for Godot is a successful fruition of absurdism in all respect. We see the ambiance of absurdism recurs in the play's entire concept. Absurdism is followed in its character setting, use of language, stage setting, and its ideology. If we perceive the play from the lens of conventional play, waiting for Godot may appear to us absolutely meaningless. So far, we use to follow the trends of conventional play which may be categorized to various genres as tragedy, comedy, serio comedy etc. where heroes are generally depicted as superman. In Shakespearean tragic plays like Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and others we see the protagonists had their struggles to face, which was shown in those plays heroically. The characters in all these plays belonged to royal families, even their struggle of life was ornamented with sophistication, dignity, and pride. They are all the victims of their fate, the entire life they struggle against the injustice caused by their fate. The fatality of the fate that cannot be ignored, almost all the tragic heroes are the victims in the hands of fate. Thus, the aspects of tragedy and the reasons of tragic circumstances of the protagonists could be perceived in a concrete manner. But in the play Waiting for Godot, we see a reverse of heroism. The heroes in the play are two tramps, they spent the livelihood near the ditch, the austere stage setting, the bizarre language they use, the only barren tree, the purposeless movements, the monotonous environment all reflects revolves round the theme of absurdism.

Research objectives:

1. To explore the meaning and purpose of waiting
2. To find the drawbacks of human existence
3. To evaluate the meaning of hope and aspirations

Methodology: Qualitative research analysis is done by analyzing the text and descriptive approach is drawn to conceptualize the current theme of the paper.

Background: In the play, we see Vladimir and Estragon the two main characters are waiting for Godot. Although it is not specified in the play who Godot is and what favor could he do for them. But the tramps kept on waiting for him (Godot) with a hope (which is also not disclosed) in the play. As we know that literature is the mirror of society and the reality is the deeds of literature. Thus, the play Waiting for Godot reflects the realism and truth of life in a sarcastic manner. On earth we opine for several things, we run against our expectations, we keep on waiting for several things like to achieve success, for a person, financial success, etc. whereas we exactly do not know what are the reasons of such prolonged waiting throughout our life consecutively.

The play Waiting for Godot dwindle between the thought of why and what, which is not asked in a loud tone but very meekly. Godot the character in the play is not signified with physical entity and activities. He/ She never appeared in the play. A messenger boy functioned as a mediator in between Godot and the two tramps. The boy comes and informs the tramps about Godot. He is the only commuter between the two worlds. In the play we see, every day Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot and the messenger boy informs them that he (Godot) will not come the day, but another day. Again, the boy appears in the play and repeats the same. The information received from the boy upsets the tramps but they do not give up waiting. Rather, with new hope and enthusiasm they wait for Godot for the next day.

The play *Waiting for Godot* is constructed in the realm of world war II. The impact of war brought disillusion, disappointment, despoilment, restlessness, and futile idealism of war and life. Aftermath of war brought immense disillusionment towards life. The present play *Waiting for Godot* is a burning deed of the disillusionment of post-world war era. The drab setting, tramps as protagonists, austere stage setting, directionless speech, and overall all waiting without reason are all burning examples of such despair and disillusionment.

It is seen that throughout our life we keep on waiting with a hope and aspirations. Sometimes it is also discerned that we show our patience and perseverance to long for something with a positive hope and outcome. If it is deeply observed, we see, most of our "waiting" do not carry meaning and significance in our life. It seems we wait for wait's sake. In waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon seemed to be waiting for Godot endlessly. *Waiting for Godot* the play, does not specify the reason of waiting nor it helped us to discover the identity of Godot himself.

As Beckett's title indicates, the central act of the play is waiting, and one of the most salient aspects of the play is that nothing really seems to happen. Vladimir and Estragon spend the entire play waiting for Godot, who never comes. Estragon repeatedly wants to leave, but Vladimir insists that they stay, in case Godot actually shows up. As a result of this endless waiting, both Vladimir and Estragon are "bored to death," as Vladimir himself puts it. Both Vladimir and Estragon repeat throughout the play that there is "nothing to be done" and "nothing to do." They struggle to find ways to pass the time, so they end up conversing back and forth about nothing at all—including talking about how they don't know what to talk about—simply to occupy themselves while waiting. The boredom of the characters on-stage mirrors the boredom of the audience. Beckett has deliberately constructed a play where not only his characters, but also his audience wait for something that never happens. Just like Estragon and Vladimir, the audience waits during the play for some major event or climax that never occurs. Audience members might at times feel uncomfortable and want, like Estragon, to leave, but are bound to stay, in case Godot should actually arrive later in the play.

All of this waiting for nothing, talking about nothing, and doing nothing contributes to a pervasive atmosphere of nihilism in the play. Broadly defined, nihilism is a denial of any significance or meaning in the world. Deriving from the Latin word for "nothing" (*nihil*), it is a worldview centred around negation, claiming that there is no truth, morality, value, or—in an extreme form—even reality. This seems to describe the world of the play, largely emptied out of meaning, emotion, and substance, leading to characters who blather on endlessly in insignificant conversation. Given the play's deep exploration of the absurd humour and feelings of alienation that arise from this nihilistic understanding of the world, one could say that *Waiting for Godot* is, at its core, about nothing.

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 Azarov 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 scepticism 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 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, cosmic purposelessness has 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 anti-foundationalism, 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 his plays,

Waiting for Godot, begins with the supporting of the nihilistic philosophy – “nothing to be done”

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 are a relief from tormenting life. There is no denying of the fact that their decision of committing suicide is a sedate example of nihilism but their ultimate decision of surmounting the self-destroying idea shows the light of idealism.

Therefore, it can be estimated that *waiting for Godot* is not only a play that 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's arrival. This indicates the essential feature of human's arrival. 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.

Existentialism is a pessimistic outlook toward life that views the world from the perspective of gloom and dismay. This philosophical discourse narrates the condition of human beings as being one of the lost souls wandering around the limitless seas of despair with no hope in sight.

The universe that hosts the species of *Homo sapiens* appears to them like a void with no outlet for escape. Such alienated existence of humankind, rotting away beneath the sands of anguish and despair, finds solace in the arms of an existentialist when they talk about the human condition under the pretext of "Absurdism."

Absurdity seeks to capture the unshakable will of humanity to carry on living without any logical indispensability of its existence. This philosophical inclination stresses the meaninglessness of life by highlighting the futile indulgences of meagre people. This is where the two protagonists, Estragon and Vladimir, seem to be most relevant in terms of the existentialist narrative.

Throughout the course of the drama, the two main characters do not seem to move from the point of their initial location. They are immobile in a world that has no specific time frame, devoted purpose, or even established systems. In fact, the entire plotline revolves around sheer uncertainty and insecurity.

Amidst this chaos of nothingness, the two characters do little to nothing to alter their fate. They appear to be blind conformists being swayed around by the merciless tide of time. All they do is simply exist without actually endeavouring to inject meaning and purpose into their existence. This high level of plot absurdity makes this play such an exquisite masterpiece of the Absurdist Theatre in particular and a reflection of the philosophy of Existentialism in general.

Conclusion: The play *Waiting for Godot* is centred round the theme on waiting. The central characters, Vladimir and Estragon, the tramps kept on waiting for a visitor, Godot till the end of the play. Amidst the chaos of nothingness, the two tramps do little to nothing to alter their fate. They appear to be blind conformists being swayed around by the merciless tide of time. In the play, they contemplate to commit suicide, they decide to move on, but cannot carry out the plan according to wish. Nevertheless, the play revolves round multiple themes as such, absurdism, nihilism, and existentialism. The primary concept of the play is waiting, made by two tramps. The use of symbolism, austere stage setting, directionless speeches, tramps as protagonists and overall their relentless waiting are all measured through various lances. In the play, waiting itself carries several meanings to the central characters as well as to their audience. Although the waiting in the play, waiting for Godot, has been directed as void of meaning but at the same time we get a message not to give up hope till the end. Waiting may appear in the play futile, relentless, void of meaning. Waiting, the theme in the play has been detected from various aspects too. The sprouting leaves on a barren tree, giving up the very idea of suicide, may be taken as instances of revival of hope in life. Though it is very rarely discernible in the play but somehow it can be felt somewhere.

Waiting for Godot as a reflection of existential themes Still this play doesn't promote proposition of nihilism. Two tramps do nothing indeed also they're doing commodity. They're staying for Godot. They've set a purpose for them through which they accept their actuality. Likewise, they're chancing their individualities. They're unfit to find answers of their questions and the only reason due to which they aren't successful is that they're confused.

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