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1 Introduction: Statement of the Topic of Research:

Samuel Beckett, better known for his absurd dramas in general and Waiting for Godot in particular, has emerged as an absurd novelist as well. Beckett has authored a good bulk of fiction also that centers around the Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable and Murphy. A lot of research has been undertaken on the absurdity in the dramas of Beckett. It was thought to focus on absurdity in the novels of Beckett because under the debris of Beckett’s theatrical writing or dramatic works, there is the need to uncover Beckett’s fame and potential as an absurd novelist. Hence, the present research work concentrates on absurdity (or absurdism as it is alternatively termed) evident in Beckett’s select novels.

Absurdism/absurdity, which is considered as one of the most exciting and creative movements in modern theatre, has completely altered the nature of approaching drama. Absurdity has been defined and interpreted differently by different critics.

“Absurd means as in harmonious, out of harmony with reason, playing opposed to reason, ridiculous, and silly.” (Oxford Dictionary, 2002: 2)

“Absurdity is that which has no purpose, goal or objective.” (Kafka,1998: 12)

“Absurdity in its dramas and novels reflects the attitude that there is no in the universe. It also reflects the view that Human life is meaningless and futile. It suggests that living in such a condition man’s life become absurd. In absurd plays and novels human beings are portrayed as isolated from others, a situation that existed in Europe, during and after the Second World War.” (Beckett, 1962: 4)

The current movement of absurdism has its roots in Alfred Jarry’s French play Ubu Roi and in Shakespearean drama especially through the influence of Commedia dell’ Arte. Absurdism or absurdity in the post world war is perceived as a rebellion or revolt against the traditional values and beliefs of Western culture and literature. The author’s personal experience and intimate feelings are the central inspirational sources reflecting both their state of mind and their spirit. Samuel Beckett belongs to the galaxy of revolutionary writers like Eugene Ionesco, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Edward Albee and Harold Pinter. The work of these writers is an expression of their personal experience which Albert CAMUS Characterized as ‘Absurdity’ in his book of essay The Myth of Sisyphus.

The characteristics of absurdity found in absurd dramas and novels usually are,
1) Free floating images,
2) Irrationality,
3) Disorderliness,
4) Illogical and in comprehensible, 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.

Absurdity is a keyword, main theme and the central idea of Beckett’s dramatic and fictional work. Beckett 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. Absurdity 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.

Samuel Beckett has considered as the most eminent and influential writer of absurdism in drama and in prose fiction, was an Irishman living in Paris who often wrote in French and then translated his works into English. Becket has tried his hand in almost all sorts of literary genres. His dramatic work needs no discussion but it is imperative to mention here that he has an outstanding career as a writer of radio and TV plays, cinemas. He has written a good amount of short stories, novellas besides non-fictional work. To his credit are the collections of poetry and translated collections as well.

Beckett's career as a writer can be roughly divided into three periods: his early works, up until the end of World War II in 1945; his middle period, stretching from 1945 until the early 1960s, during which period he wrote what are probably his best-known works; and his late period, from the early 1960s until Beckett's death in 1989, during which his works tended to become shorter and his style more minimalist.

Beckett translated all of his works into English himself, with the exception of Molloy, for which he has collaborated with Patrick Bowles. The success of Waiting for Godot opened up a career in theatre for its author. Beckett went on to write a number of successful full-length plays, including Endgame (1957), The Krapp's Last Tape (1958, written in English), Happy Days (1961, also written in English), and Play (1963). In 1961, Beckett received the International Publishers' Formentor Prize in recognition of his work, which he shared that year with Jorge Luis Borges.
Beckett's outstanding achievements in prose during the period were the three novels *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (1951; *Malone Dies*) and *L'innommable* (1953: *The Unnamable*). These novels are sometimes referred as a "trilogy". Despite the widely held view that Beckett's work, as exemplified by the novels of this period, is essentially pessimistic.

The physical inactivity of the character and the character's immersion in his own head and thoughts are present in Beckett's first published novel, *Murphy* (1938), which also explores the themes of insanity (both of which would be recurrent elements in Beckett's later works). *Watt*, written while Beckett was in hiding in Roussillon during World War II, is similar in terms of themes but less exuberant in its style. It explores human movement as if it were a mathematical permutation, presaging Beckett's later preoccupation—in both his novels and dramatic works—with precise movement.

Of all the English-language modernists, Beckett's work represents the most sustained attack on the realist tradition. He has opened up the possibility of theatre and fiction that dispense with conventional plot and the unities of time and place in order to focus on essential components of the human condition. Beckett is one of the most widely discussed and highly prized of 20th-century authors, inspiring a critical industry to rival that which has sprung up around James Joyce.

Samuel Beckett’s novels are multi-dimensional pictures-connecting literary art with visual one. They give us, in the form of novel, an evidence of the author’s personal experience. There is no hesitation in perceiving Beckett’s art as an expression of his most intimate vision on the essential philosophical question about the place of human being in the world around. The present project ventures to attempt the absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s select novels. The statement of the topic of the present research study is made: ABSURDITY IN SAMUEL BECKETT’S SELECT NOVELS.

2 Need & Significance:

The need of the present study is noticed in the critical assessment of Samuel Beckett’s Works. Samuel Beckett focuses on absurdity, self-identification and human condition in the world. He, through his fictional world, addresses the basic problems of existence, survival, living and meaning of life. The present comprehensive critical evaluation of the works of Samuel Beckett with an emphasis on absurdity, self
identification, human condition in modern world and human interrelationship will be certainly useful to the readers, scholars, researchers and coming generations.

Samuel Beckett has shown artistic versatility in the production of his dramatic works, poetry collections, novels, short story collections and other literary and critical writings. The focus on Samuel Beckett is as an absurdist, as a dramatist. The works of research in the areas of his literary output such as, novels, short stories and poems have been very scant. In order to fill this gap, the present study proposes to take up an evaluative critical study of his four novels including the trilogy. The perspective of absurdism will be used to the works in this study which is applied in nature. The need and significance of the study is thus recognized, that justifies the modest attempt of the researcher to carry out a study of Samuel Beckett’s four novels.

3 Aim & Objectives:

Aim:
The aim of the present research is to reflect upon the absurdity, self identification and human interrelationship in the select novels of Samuel Beckett.

Objectives:
1) To study Samuel Beckett’s place in literature not only as a dramatist but also as a novelist.
2) To study the greatness of Samuel Beckett as a novelist.
3) To study the absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s select novels.
4) To study the self identification of the characters in the Samuel Beckett’s novels.
5) To study human interrelationship of characters in Samuel Beckett’s works.
6) To study the existentialist view of Samuel Beckett.
7) To study the absurd language of characters in Samuel Beckett’s select novels.

4 Hypothesis:
The present project seeks to verify and validate the hypothesis: Absurdity, Self-Identification and Human Interrelationship are the main concerns in the selected fictional works of Samuel Beckett.

5 Research Design / Work Plan:

Chapter-I: Samuel Beckett: Life and Literary Career

The first chapter which is introductory in nature focuses on Samuel Beckett’s life and literary works. It offers the literary as well as the theoretical backgrounds of the study. It comprises of Beckett’s contribution to literature as a poet, dramatist and a
novelist. It introduces the features of the research study such as: Absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s Select Novels.

Chapter- II: Absurdism in Molloy (1951)

The second chapter assesses absurdism in the novel *Molloy*. *Molloy* was written by Samuel Beckett initially in French. He only later translated it into English. *Molloy* is divided into two sections. In the first section, Molloy goes in search of his mother. In the second, he is pursued by Moran, an agent. Within this simple outline, spoken in the first person, is a remarkable novel, raising questions of being and aloneness that marks so much of Beckett’s work, but richly comic as well.

Molly, is voluble in his reminisces, but never conveys his personality. It is an odd combination that text using words, eventually yields little of that character. This is precisely the expression which Beckett sought, conveying nothing, since there was nothing to convey. The absurdity of this exercise is comic in itself, if it were not borne out of such a bleak view of the world.

The narrator, who now spends his time recounting somewhat dubious memories, has exceptional difficulty in expression. Yet while he encounters this difficulty, he can at times produce utterances of startling clarity. Molloy is unsettled to the core of his being by inadequacy to express, to feel, to remember, to comprehend. He holds the conviction that he is unnatural, freakish even, but the unreliable nature of perception and memory are things we must not take seriously. Molloy is as disturbing to the reader as it is for him. The degrading references to the mother are imbued with anger at introducing him, Molloy, to the misery of existence.

The sincerity of Molloy’s grim views imparts selfish assessment. Molloy’s fate is not of his making, circumstance has made him what he is; he has abdicated all responsibility for himself and unscrupulously laid blame at the feet of all those whom he has countered.

Chapter-III: Absurdism in Malone Dies (1951)

The third chapter assesses absurdism in the novel *Malone Dies*. This is the second in the famous trilogy of novels written by Samuel Beckett. An old man is dying in a room. His bowl of soup comes, his pots are emptied. He waits to die. And while he waits, he constructs stories, mainly to pass the time. Saposcat, the Lambert family, Macmann and his nurse Moll and other figures weave in and out of his vision.
and his imagination. His remarkable soliloquy, so intrinsically Beckettian, is as important as *Waiting for Godot*, or *Endgame*, the famous plays that made his name.

*Malone Dies* provides grounds for the theory that this character is a reincarnation of Molloy. The common features of both accounts can bear close scrutiny and still remain valid. The waiting will soon be over and the character will escape this ‘vale of tears’. In the meantime he amuses himself by setting tasks that he will never complete, being constantly waylaid by tangential ponderings or losing essential items such as his pencil.

**Chapter-IV: Absurdism in *The Unnamable* (1953)**

The fourth chapter assesses absurdism in *The Unnamable*. The novel consists entirely of a disjointed monologue from the perspective of an unnamed and immobile protagonist. The novel is admix of recollections and existential musings on the part of its narrator. *The Unnamable* is the third novel in Beckett’s trilogy, three remarkable prose works in which men of increasingly debilitating physical circumstances act, ponder, consider and rage against impermanence and the human condition. *The Unnamable* is without doubt the most uncompromising text and it is read here in startling fashion.

In *The Unnamable*, you cannot tell what’s going on. It is entirely in monologue, but it is not really representative of anything. It is just kind of words.

The novels seem to represent a progression from semi-normal narrative to just absurdity, with no character, just language that you get in the end of *The Unnamable*. There is no attempt to represent anything. It is just words that we get by the end.

**Chapter-V: Absurdism in *Murphy* (1938)**

The fifth chapter assesses absurdism in *Murphy*. The novel is an example of Beckett’s fascination with artistic and metaphorical possibilities of chess. *Murphy*, written shortly afterward, suggests a different inspiration. Beckett seems embarrassed to present his story of a feckless, unemployed, Irishman in London as “real” at all. The novel’s evident autobiographical content, with all kinds of strategies, is used to prevent the reader from becoming immersed in plot and character in the traditional fashion. The book opens with a tone of mockery.

The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. Murphy sat out of it, as though he were free, in a new in West Brampton. Here for what might have been six months he had eaten, drunk, slept, and put his clothes on and off, in a-medium-
sized cage of north-western aspect commanding an unbroken view of medium-size cages of south-eastern aspect.

Murphy himself is implicated in the book’s linguistic waywardness when his girlfriend Celia remarks that his words “Went dead” as soon as spoke, as if he didn’t believe in them. It is not difficult here to see a relation between the author’s denial of a traditional realism to his story and Murphy’s problems with language, his problems above all in taking seriously.

Chapter-VI:- Conclusion:

The sixth chapter assesses absurdity in the characterization, conversation, dialogues and situations in the select novels of Beckett.

While assessing the select novels descriptive and analytical methods in particular and other methods as and when necessary will be used.

6 Accomplishment of Objectives:

The aim of the study is fulfilled as will be concretely brought up in the section on the validation of the hypothesis of the present study. The aim is to note how absurdity, self-identification and human inter-relationship are reflected in the select novels of Samuel Beckett. The seven objectives of the study are accomplished in forgoing analysis of the four novels in the chapters two, three, four and five. The place of Samuel Beckett as an absurdist novelist is presented in the first chapter and in the next four chapters his trilogy and his first novel are analysed in terms of novelistic element to show the achievements of Samuel Beckett as a master novelist. Occasional references have been made to his plays in particular- Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Play. The greatness of Samuel Beckett as an absurdist novelist is remarkable. The same has been substantiated in the interpretative investigation and analytical evaluation of the four novels. The elements of absurdity such as alienation, isolation, precarious predicament in uncompromising environment, rootlessness, the study of neither here nor there, chaos, meaninglessness, irrationality being dominant are presented through the monologues and stories imagined by the protagonist who remain static and disintegrate towards slow but steady destruction. Samuel Beckett as a literary artist, Samuel Beckett as a great novelist, Samuel Beckett as the practitioner of the absurdist elements in fiction are presented in order to bring out the fact that the first three objectives of the present study are accomplished.
The elements which are closely connected with Absurdism are mentioned in the next two objectives. Self-identification is noticed in the method of characterization used by Samuel Beckett in his novels. *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* and *Murphy* are the projections of the authorial presence. They are as if his own pseudo-couple, or stand ups. In the internal portions too, his characters appear with the mirror figures such as Molloy in the first part of the novel and Moran in the second part of the same novel. Malone, Mahood and Worm are self projections as is the case with Unnamable and Murphy; similarly interrelations are significant but the breakdown of communication shows both the personal and social relations are thwarted. In this way, the fourth and the fifth objectives are accomplished.

The sixth objective of existentialist view is also related to Absurdism. The closeness of Existentialism and Absurdism discloses the measurable condition of human existence. This prepares the way for the accomplishment of the sixth objective. The seventh objective about the absurdity of the language used by the characters is accomplished through the specific illustrations in which the use of language is commented upon. The inadequacy of the language to communicate is emphasized throughout. In short, all the seven objectives of the present study have been duly accomplished in the course of the presentation and analysis of the illustrative data on Absurdism.

7 **Validation of Hypothesis:**

The present study intends to explore Samuel Beckett as not only a great dramatist but also a great novelist in the history of English Literature. The analytical evaluation of the four novels provides an ample evidence to verify and validate the truth of the hypothesis stated at the onset of the present study.

8 **Summing Up:**

The last chapter has a summary of research findings and hypothesis; it has lead to the Absurdity, Self-Identification and Interrelationship in the novels of Samuel Beckett. The researcher has attempted to focus the unexplored areas in the conclusion. The researcher has drawn his own inferences regarding the Absurdity, Self-Identification and Interrelationship in the novels of Samuel Beckett.