CHAPTER 1
SAMUEL BECKETT: LIFE & LITERARY CAREER

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CHAPTER - I
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1.1 A Biographical Sketch of Samuel Beckett -

1.1.1 Early Life and Career of Samuel Beckett:

Samuel Beckett was ranked the greatest poet, novelist and dramatist of the absurdist school of the twentieth century. He was born in April 1906, on Friday the 13th which was Good Friday that year. He was born at Fox rock, near Dublin, second son of William Frank Beckett and Mary Beckett. William Beckett was a prosperous businessman in Dublin, well-liked and respected person. They had a good parental relationship with Samuel Beckett and he had a happy childhood. His parents wished him to be educated well, and were proud of his sporting as well as academic progress. Samuel Beckett was educated at Earls Fort house preparatory school in Dublin, and then at the boarding school Portia Royal, one of the best and most expensive schools in Ireland.

Samuel Beckett then went to Trinity College to read French and Italian. In school as well as college, Beckett was a brilliant student as well as an outstanding sportsman. At college, he played chess, golf, cricket and clubs. He actually played one first class cricket match. He participated in dramatics and, was an ardent theatre goer. He completed his Bachelor of Arts at the Trinity College in 1927, topping his batch with a first class and winning the gold medal. He was then selected to represent Trinity College in an exchange programme with Ecole Normal superior in Paris, which he joined in 1928. For the two terms in between, he taught at Comebell College, Belfast. The two years he spent at Paris are notable for his meeting fellow-Irishman, James Joyce and becoming part of his intimate circle; Joyce became a major influence on Beckett’s early literary style. He also won a prize in a competition for poems written on the subject of time. In 1930, Beckett returned to Ireland to join Trinity College as an Assistant Lecturer in French. He received his Master of Arts degree. He did not enjoy being an academic even though he published his acclaimed book on Marcel Proust during this period in 1931. He was in Germany, on his Christmas vacation in 1932, when he telegraphed his resignation. He was to say later that:

“I could not bear the absurdity of teaching other what I did not know myself.”

(The News Magazine, 1996: 2)
In 1929, Beckett published his first work, a critical essay entitled "Dante……Bruno. Vico………Joyce." The essay defends Joyce’s work and method, chiefly from allegations of meaningless obscurity and dimness. Samuel Beckett’s close relationship with Joyce and his family cooled, however, when he rejected the advances of Joyce’s daughter Lucia owing to her progressing schizophrenia. Beckett’s first short story, Assumption (1929), was published in Jolas’s periodical ‘transition’. The next year he won a small literary prize with his hastily composed poem Whoroscope (1930). The poem draws on a biography of Rene Descartes that Beckett happened to be reading when he was encouraged to submit. (Wikipedia)

In 1930, Beckett returned to Trinity College as a lecturer, though he soon became disillusioned with the post. He expressed his aversion by playing a trick on the Modern Language Society of Dublin. Beckett read a learned paper in French on a Toulouse author named Jean du Chas, founder of a movement called Concentrism. Chas and Concentrism were pure fiction, having been invented by Beckett to mock pedantry. Beckett resigned from Trinity at the end of 1931. His brief academic career was terminated. He commemorated it with the poem Gnome, which was inspired by his reading of Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship: It was eventually published in the Dublin Magazine (1934:2)

“Spend the years of learning squandering
Courage for the years of wandering
Through a world politely turning
From the loutishness of learning”.

Beckett travelled in Europe. He spent some time in London, where in 1931 he published Proust (1931), his criticism on Schopenhauer is study of the French author Marcel Proust. Two years later, following his father’s death, he began two years’ treatment with Tavistock Clinic Psychoanalyst. Dr. Wilfred Bion, who took him to hear Carl Jung’s third Tavistock lecture, an event which Beckett still recalled many years later. The lecture focused on the subject of the “never properly born”. Aspects of it became evident in Beckett’s later works such as Watt (1945; published1953) and Waiting for Godot (1953). In 1932, he wrote his first novel, Dream of Fair to Middling Women (1932; published1992). After many rejections from publishers Beckett decided to abandon it. (It was eventually published in 1993). This novel served as a source for many of Beckett’s early volumes of poems, as Whoroscope (1930), Echo’s Bones and other Precipitates (1935), and Collected poems in English

Beckett published a number of essays and reviews, including *Recent Irish Poetry* (in The Bookman, August 1934) and *Humanistic Quietism*, a review of his friend Thomas McGreevy’s poems (in The Dublin Magazine, July-September 1934). They focused on the work of McGreevy, Brian Coffey, Denis Devlin and Blanaid Salkeld, despite their slender achievements at the time, comparing them favourably with their Celtic Revival contemporaries and invoking Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and the French Symbolists as their precursors. In describing these poets he desires to form “the nucleus of living poets in Ireland”. Beckett was tracing the outlines of an Irish poetic modernist Canon.

In 1935 - the year that Beckett successfully published a book of his poetry, *Echo’s Bones and other Precipitates* (1935)- Beckett worked on his novel *Murphy* (1938). He also wrote some other novels - *Mercier and Camier* (1946), *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), *The Unnamable* (1953), and *How It Is* (1961). In May, he wrote to McGreevy that he had been reading about film and wished to go to Moscow to study with Sergei Eisenstein at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. In mid-1936 he wrote Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin to offer himself as their apprentices. Nothing came of this. Beckett’s letter was lost owing to Eisenstein’s quarantine during the smallpox outbreak, as well as his focus was then on a script re-write of his postponed film production. Beckett, meanwhile, finished *Murphy*. Then, in 1936, he departed for extensive travel around Germany, during which time he filled several notebooks with lists of noteworthy artwork that he had seen. He noted his distaste for the Nazi Savagery that was overtaking the country. Returning to Ireland briefly in 1937, he oversaw the publication of *Murphy* (1938), which he translated into French the following year. He fell out with his mother, which contributed to his decision to settle permanently in Paris. Beckett remained in Paris following the outbreak of World War II in 1939, preferring, in his own words:

“France at war to Ireland at peace.”


His was soon a known face in and around Left Bank cafes, where he strengthened his allegiance with Joyce and forged new ones with artists Alberto Giacometti and Marcel
Duchamp, with whom he regularly played chess. Sometime around December 1937, Beckett had a brief affair with Peggy Guggenheim, who nicknamed him, “Oblomov”.

In January 1938 in Paris, Beckett was stabbed in the chest and nearly killed when he refused the solicitations of a notorious pimp. Joyce arranged a private room for Beckett at the Hospital. The publicity surrounding the stabbing attracted the attention of Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil, who previously knew Beckett slightly from his first stay in Paris. This time, however, the two would begin a lifelong companionship. At a preliminary hearing, Beckett asked his attacker for the motive behind the stabbing. Beckett eventually dropped the charges against his attacker partially to avoid further formalities, partly because he found prudent likeable and well-mannered. Beckett occasionally recounted the incident in jest.

1.1.2 Impact of World War II on Samuel Beckett:

Beckett joined the French Resistance after the 1940 occupation by Germany, in which he worked as a courier. On several occasions as over the next two years he was nearly caught by the Gestapo. In August 1942, his unit was betrayed and he and Suzanne fled south on foot to the safety of the small village of Roussillon, in the Vaucluse department in the Provence Alpes Cole d’Azur region. There he continued to assist the Resistance by storing armaments in the back yard of his home. During the two years that Beckett stayed in Roussillon he indirectly helped the Maquis sabotage the German army in the Vaucluse Mountains, though he rarely spoke about his wartime work in later life.

Beckett was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille de la Resistance by the French government for his efforts in fighting the German occupation. To the end of his life, however, Beckett would refer to his work with the French resistance as “boy scout stuff”. Though hiding in Roussillon, he continued to work on the novel Watt which he began writing in 1941 and completed it in 1945, but not published until 1953.

1.1.3 Later Life and Death of Samuel Beckett:

The 1960s was a period of change for Beckett, both on a personal level and as a writer. In 1961, he married Suzanne in a secret civil ceremony in England (its secrecy due to reasons relating to French inheritance Law.). The success of his plays led to invitations to attend rehearsals and productions around the world, leading eventually to a new career as a theatre director. In 1956, he had his first commission
from the BBC Third Programme for a radio play, *All That Fall* (1957). He continued writing sporadically for radio and extended his scope to include cinema and television. He began to write in English again, although he also wrote in French until the end of his life.

From the late 1950s until his death, Beckett had a relationship with Barbara Bray, a widow who worked as a script editor for the BBC. Knowlson (1998: 112) wrote of them:

“She was small and attractive, but, above all, keenly intelligent and well-read. Beckett seems to have been immediately attracted by her and she to him. Their encounter was highly significant for them both, for it represented the beginning of a relationship that was to last, in parallel with that with Suzanne, for the rest of his life”.

In October 1969 while on holiday in Tunis with Suzanne, Beckett heard that he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Anticipating that her intensely private husband would be saddled with fame from that moment on, Suzanne called the award a “Catastrophe”. In true ascetic fashion, he gave away all of the prize money. While Beckett did not devote much time to interviews, he sometimes met the artists, scholars, and admirers who sought him out in the anonymous lobby of the Hotel PLM St. Jacques in Paris near his Montparnasse home. Although an intensely private man, a review of the second volume of Beckett’s letters by Roy Foster, appearing in the December 15th, 2011 issue of *The New Republic*, reveals Beckett to be not only unexpectedly amiable but frequently prepared to talk about his work and particularly about the process behind it. His play *Endgame* has been adapted for the short film *Statement* in (1965).

Suzanne died on 17th July 1989. Confined to a nursing home and suffering from emphysema and possibly Parkinson’s disease. Beckett died on 22 December of the same year. The two were interred together in the Cimetiere du Montparnasse in Paris and share a simple granite gravestone that follows Beckett’s directive that it should be “any colour, so long as it’s grey.”
Many 20th century composers, including Luciano Berio, Gyorgy Kurtag, Morton Feldman, Pascal Dusapin, Scott Fields, Philip Glass, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati and Heinz Holliger have created musical works based on his texts. Beckett’s work was also an influence on many visual artists. Beckett is one of the most widely discussed and highly prized of 20th-century authors. Sartre and Theodor Adorno, praised him, for his revelation of absurdity, the other for his works’ critical refusal of simplicities; others such as Georg Lukacs condemn for ‘decadent’ lack of realism. An American critic Harold Bloom pays attention to his atheism.

Some of the best-known pictures of Beckett were taken by photographer John Minihan, is considered to be among the top three photographs of the 20th century. It was the theater photographer John Haynes, however, who took possibly the most widely reproduced image of Beckett. It is used on the cover of the Knowlson biography.

On 10th December 2009, the newest bridge across the River Liffey in Dublin was opened and named the Samuel Beckett Bridge in his honour, which is reminiscent of a harp on its side in its design.

(Wikipedia)

1.2 Samuel Beckett as an Absurd Novelist:

Samuel Beckett’s novels are marked by the artist’s vision of the world into which his characters are placed. He deals with the position and the situation of man in his surrounding world, which is a major and always recurring theme in the four novels Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, and Murphy.

At this early creative period, Beckett's style is filled with erudite remarks, complicated imagery and general literary effusion. Beckett was aware of his style and it did not satisfy him. In the middle 1960’s, in a discussion with Aidan Higgins, the Irish novelist, Beckett vehemently denigrated style, comparing it to a bow tie about a throat cancer. Beckett obviously wished to free himself from the temptation towards an elevated style. His goal was to achieve a simple and stark style, which would express clearly and concisely what he was endeavoring to say. The trilogy, in its comparative lack of extended and pretentious figures of speech, shows the reader the success of Beckett's attempts to modify his style. What is being said takes precedence over how it is said. Ironically, the style of the trilogy is as truly indicative of Beckett's hand as was that of his earlier works, though it is far more compelling and hypnotic.
by virtue of its simple strength”. Beckett’s modified style shuts the absurdist elements he desires to project in his novels.

Structurally, the trilogy can be classified with those works which illustrate the form known as the ‘stream of consciousness’. As in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1935), the trilogy is composed of the monologues of several characters. Authorial comment, however, is virtually dispensed with. The richness of Joyce's novels, the diversity and complexity of its metaphors, always remind the reader of the guiding power which drives the work to its close. In *Ulysses*, the fourteenth chapter is *The Oxen of the Sun* (Chapter-14) in which Joyce parodies the styles of English literature from Anglo-Saxon to the present day, gives us ample illustration of this veiled, but nevertheless obvious, authorial control. Beckett’s novels are characterized by the grimness of humour, which makes the readers laugh and turns them in words to contemplate on the melancholic aspects of the predicament of man in an uncompromising environment.

In a desire to portray reality per se it is obvious that to colour a narrative with any particular point of view or moral stance is to allow that reality to suffer. Yet, by definition, once any human experience is given expression through the medium of language, whether written or spoken, that experience is one step away from verity, and excludes all other interpretations. Therefore it is impossible to give an absolute representation of reality. Since this is so, we may assume that the clearest definition will at least approximate the truth, since any definition cannot render it absolutely. However, anyone experience may be defined in seemingly infinite and contradictory ways, and Beckett’s attempt to overcome this problem is illustrated in the trilogy. The presentation of reality is an approximate format is what Beckett attempts to reveal in his novels to bring out the absurdism in human life.

Beckett's aim in his work is to define the paradoxes which man experiences as a member of the human race. Murphy, Watt, Molloy, Malone and the Unnamable all try to explain away the inexplicable, define the chaos of the human condition, and give some semblance of order to man's intellectual dilemmas:

“‘The confusion is not my invention ••• It is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in. The only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess. It is not a mess you can make sense of’”. (Driver, 1992:22-23).
The paradox which colors Beckett's work is that he is trying to make sense of something which, by definition, cannot be rationalized. As a result, we are forced to acknowledge the truth in Beckett’s statement concerning the endeavors of the artist; for him

“To be an artist is to fail, as no others dare fail, that failure is his world and to shrink from it desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living.”

(Cohn, 2006:33-34).

Beckett’s hero is a Sisyphusian type of man waiting for the fulfillment of his fate, which seems to be eternal through his suffering and hoping. He is alienated from the world, which is unknown, remote, and indifferent, and from which he is isolated by the walls of his self. The conflict between two different substances - the world and the human subject, leads to the feelings of absurdity and to fundamental existential questions about the meaning of human life in a world where he lives as a stranger. The existential indifference and chaos in the physical as well as spiritual universe is highlighted through the absurdist novels by Samuel Beckett.

Beckett’s characters are creatures grounded in absurdity; there is no meaning in their being which is why their lives involve mere waiting for the end, for death. The waiting is a pure experience of time itself, time which disintegrates into smaller and shorter periods, so that their waiting is a never-ending fate having no purpose, but the only aim-the end. Beckett’s characters’ tragedy consists in their empty waiting which becomes a long period of suffering; it consists in the power of life which still keeps them breathing and going on, although they are very close to their aim, the end. The greatness of Beckett’s absurd man in his intractability with which he continually fills up his precarious fate, and although his suffering increases as time stops he does not live without hope and joy in life. Beckett presents his characters that perfectly bring out the absurdity of human existence. (Wikipedia)

Samuel Beckett, who began with the most intellectual and allusive of styles, heavily influenced by James Joyce, underwent a kind of epiphany at the end of the Second World War. This resulted in part from his experiences in the French Resistance and his work with the Red Cross building a hospital at Saint-Lo in Normandy. They brought a man whose whole life had been tied up with learning into
contact with the pain of ordinary people, and to a profound questioning of the role of
the writer as witness to suffering humanity.

Beckett went to the offices of Jack Kahane, owner of obelisk press, seeking
translation work, and crossed the path of Henry Miller, a man who surprisingly had
much in common with Beckett. Miller advised Beckett to move away from Joyce and
his method and to strike out on his own. Perhaps a seed took root. Whatever the exact
sequence of events, Beckett came to see the Kernel of his own method in reduction, a
shift away from complex expression and self-conscious virtuosity the aesthetic of
achievement. He told his biographer James Knowlson (1998:48) that his:

“own way was in impoverishment, in
lack of knowledge and taking away, in
subtraction rather than adding”.

He felt a keen affinity with others who did the same, such as the Sculptor Pala, he
once visited for hours, asking only, “When did you begin reducing?” Beckett’s move
into the French language was a strand of his quest for purity. With a more limited
vocabulary, free from the more vigorous or playful aspects of English, and to a degree
shored up by the formality of French, his work increasingly suggests the inability of
language to convey the depth of human suffering. Beckett’s moving away from the
shadow of James Joyce allowed forge an intellectually compact, concise, compressed
style that discloses absurdity to the fullest extent.

(Wikipedia)

1.3 Samuel Beckett’s Self - Portrayal in His Protagonis t:

Samuel Beckett was a kind, modest man. Throughout his life, he avoided
interviews, audiences, and, when it finally arrived, celebrity. He declined to surround
himself with a coterie of admirers, or to propose political or moral solutions before a
public perpetually in search of celebrity wisdom. Beckett’s thoughtfulness and
generosity were apparent in any number of situations- form his unsolicited financial
and to friends and artists to the handwritten notes he returned to inquiring students,
scholars, and even, on one occasion, the warden of a German penitentiary. It would
apparently never have occurred to him, regardless of the public attention or
inconvenience involved, to withhold help from someone in need. Alec Reid, the
nearly blind Trinity lecturer and Critic, recalls a “gently and tender” Beckett attending
to him at their earlier Paris meeting, at a time when Beckett himself was having difficulties with his eyes.

Lois Gordon (1996: 41-50) has proposed that it is the children of the bourgeoisie, not of the workers, who are likely to embody the rebellion against bourgeois values and the status quo. Although the 1960s in America provides a later example, late nineteenth- and early twentieth century middle-class Europe also produced children who rejected their origins to pursue great creative vision - Wittgenstein, Kafka, Cocteau, Stein, Pound, Breton, Proust, and Gide, not to mention the Irish Oscar Wilde and John Millington Synge. Beckett, in this regard, may be typical of certain gifted children of the middle class who turned to the life of the mind in revolt against the often limited vision of middle-class privilege and propriety. But Beckett was also unique. Thus we can feel secure in presuming that the trilogy relates to man and his universe; beyond that we must suspend belief and endeavor to interpret what we read in the light of those first assumptions. The characters involve us, and the vague geography they move in - with its towns, plains, seasides and forests which are never quite brought into focus - ceases to be important.

There is much which puzzles in the commentaries of the four writers. In *Malone Dies*, when Malone loses his pencil and spends two unforgettable days of which nothing will ever be known. Malone seems to be speaking of someone else, or denying his own existence. Examples like these are dotted throughout the first two novels and the reader must wait until he comes to the final novel in the trilogy for explanations. The reality of the characters’ existences is already in question in the reader's mind, and in the monologue of the Unnamable he comes to realize Beckett's artistic coup-de-grace.

The reader, of necessity must return to the previous novels and re-read them with the understanding that Molloy, Moran, and Malone are as fictional as the characters in their own stories, for their omniscient author *is* the Unnamable. Beckett *is* one step further away from his characters. Not only are his novels written in the first person, but he gives one of those narrators the responsibility for the creation of all the others. The reader is left alone, with no help from Beckett, to try to piece together and rationalize the continual affirmations and subsequent negations of the final hero. He assumes authorship and every word that Molloy, Moran and Malone report is accountable to him.

(Wikipedia)
1.4 The Conceptual Background of the Absurd:

The Theatre of The Absurd is a term derived from Albert Camus work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942:3):

“In a Universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels stranger. His is a formidable exile….. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity”.

It is a term applied to a group of dramatists and novelists in the 1950s who did not regard themselves as a school but whom all seemed to share certain attitudes towards the predicament of the man in the universe, (Abrams, 2001:1). It was Albert Camus (1913-1960) who first realized the absurdity of existence during the Second World War and gave a vociferous expression to the meaninglessness of in his novels and dramas. Albert Camus defined the absurd as the tension which emerges from man’s determination to discover purpose and order in a world which steadfastly to evidence either. He diagnosed Humanity’s plight as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings. Awareness of this lack of purpose in all we do produce a state of metaphysical anguish which is the central theme of the writers in the Theatre of the Absurd, most notably Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter. The lesser figures of this school of drama are Robert Pignet, N. F. Simpson, Edward Albee, Fernando Arrabod and Gunter Grass.

The absurdist playwrights and novelists believe that our existence is absurd. We are born without asking to be born, we die without seeking death, we live between birth and death trapped within our body and our reason, unable to conceive of a time in which we were not or a time in which we will not be for nothingness is very much like the concept of infinity: something we perceive only in so far as we cannot experience it. Thrust into life, armed with our senses, will and reason, we feel ourselves to be potent beings. Yet our senses give the lie to our thought and our thought defies our senses. We never perceive anything completely we are permitted to entertain committed only one perspective of any object, fact, or situation our own. All of our creations are doomed to decay as we ourselves are doomed to death.
The absurdists of today write in such diverse styles that one hesitates to compare them in anything but their philosophical categories. However, some generalizations can be made. The modern absurdist’s, almost to a man, determinedly resist the traditional separation of farce and tragedy. The subject of farce is the same as that of tragedy the terrible or comic discovery of man’s absurdity, ignorance and impotence. The essential difference between the two forms is one of quality: farce arouses laughter and tragedy draws our tears. Tragedy awakens our sympathy, while farce dispels our sympathy and frees our cruelty.

Of necessity, and absurdist playwright and novelist is one who is predominantly thematic in his dramaturgy. This is to say, these are dramatists of a philosophical bent who place the greatest value on their thematic statement. Consequently, their plays are constructed and polished in such a fashion as to call attention to their intellectual content and this inspite of the fact that their thought refuses to be narrowly systematized. This tends to make their works more presentational than the works of authors less concerned with universals and more inclined to create a drama of sensuous experience of realism.

The tendency toward presentational drama or novel is another pattern which identifies the creative posture of the absurdist. If there is one quality that marks the major tends of modern art and certainly the art which burgeons out of Paris, it is the movement toward pure art; or “deHammized art” as Ortega Gassed puts it. Modern artists and absurd playwrights and novelists in particular seem concerned with creating works that proclaim their independence from the traditional Neo-Aristotelian strictures of imitation or representationalism. These playwrights and novelists want a drama and novel that proclaims:

“This is not Life! It is my work of art about life! Or even. This is life itself that I have created……. Man made life…… ersatz life.”

(Study Times, 2001:5).

(Wikipedia)

1.5 The Philosophy of Absurdism:

Absurdism and Absurdity are the two sides of the same coin. Both the concepts or terms are used alternatively for the same thing. It was Martin Esslin who
first discussed the features of Absurd drama or novel in his book, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961). The absurd plays or novels had no conventional plots, dialogue or character. These plays or novels had no accepted form, and the characters, their speech and action conveyed no meaning, logic or rationality. In the true sense, the plays expressed the absurd plight or condition of man, whose existence had no reason or purpose. The plays or novels were grotesquely comic and were a parody of traditional culture and traditional drama. The essence of such plays or novels was that the dramatists invited readers and audience to make sense out of the senseless life and to communicate the incommunicable. The main theme of these plays or novels is the failure of communication between man and man, man and society, man and God:

“The term is applied to a number of the drama and prose fiction which have in common the sense that the Human condition is essentially absurd, and that this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd.”

(Esslin, 1992:8).

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.” (Kafka1998: 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 literature has its roots also in the movements of ‘expressionism’ and ‘surrealism’, as well as in the fiction, written in the 1920’s, of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* (1920), and *Metamorphosis* (1920). The current movement, however, emerged
in France after the horrors of World War-II, as a rebellion against essential beliefs and values of traditional culture and traditional literature. This earlier tradition had included the assumptions that Human beings are fairly rational creatures who live in an at least partially intelligible universe, that they are part of an ordered social structure, and that they may be capable of heroism and dignity even in defeat. After the 1940’s, however, there was a widespread tendency, especially prominent in the ‘existential philosophy of man’ of letters such as Albert Camus (1998:12), to view:

“A human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth value, or meaning and to represent Human Life - in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning as it moves from the nothingness, it lame toward the nothingness - where it must end as an existence which is both anguished and absurd.”

Absurd, the absurd literature or theatre of the absurd are explained as:

“A phrase referring to twentieth century works that depict the absurdity of the modern human condition, often with implicit human condition, often with implicit references to humanities loss or lack of religious, philosophical, or central roots. Such works depict the individual as essentially isolated and alone even when surrounded by other people and things.”

(Abrams, 2001:1).

Because writers related to this movement believe that the only way to represent the absurdity of the modern condition is to write in an absurd manner; the literature of the Absurd is bizarre in style as it in subject matter. Conventions governing, everything from plot to dialogue is routinely flouted, as is the notion that a work of literature should be unified anti-coherent. The resulting scenes, actions, and
dialogues are usually disconnected, repetitive and intentionally nonsensical. Such works might be comic were it not for their obviously and grotesquely tragic dimensions.

Camus (1998:9) defined the Absurd as:

“...the tension which emerges from man’s determination to discover purpose and order in a world which steadfastly refuses to evidence either. This paradox leaves man’s actions, aspirations and emotions merely ironical. Human qualities such as perseverance and courage no longer function except as derisory comments on men’s impotence; basic instincts and responses, the more forces of the individual, become the source of his misery.”

Camus himself could see a limited transcendence in man’s ability to recognize and even exalt in the absurd or in the minimal consolation of stoicism. But he came to feel that absurdity implied a world which appeared to sanction Nazi brutality as easily as it did individual acts of violence.

Theatre, in its original ancient meaning THEA’pTRON (Place of watching auditorium), is a special artistic form, one of the three literary modes, narrative, lyric, dramatic, which is constituted not only of words, but also by exclusively dramatic visual components such as movement, physical gestures, scenes……etc. It does not occur inside the human soul as other forms do (novel, poem, essay), but it happens in an outside world.

At the same time, drama is composed of two different spaces, which are in a mutual relationship - the stage and the auditorium. Both components, being in mutual polarity can exist only communication with each other. This communication can only work if both sides are aware of their roles.

The actors can move and speak in different ways, tragic, comic, etc; but always with the necessary precondition that nothing they speak about and do is really true. Their acts and speeches are mere fiction, and that is the main actor’s activity - to play fiction. The spectators’ passivity consists of accepting the fiction, in leaving real
life and entering the world of fiction. Theatre becomes theatre only if both sides play their roles, which makes the fundamental principle of theatre in general. If the general form of theatre is a fictive picture, the Theatre of the Absurd is a “picture in a picture”, because its content is, at the same time, also a picture - an image, the author’ subjective vision. He transforms his vision through the symbolic language of theatre into the symbolic life situation of the author’s vision; this is content, expressed in a picture, as a formal component of a dramatic play or novel.

The Theatre of the Absurd has a similar function; it makes man aware of his position in the universe, which although precarious and mysterious, expresses the absence of any such generally accepted cosmic system of values. While the previous attempts to confront man with the world reflected a coherent and generally familiar version of truth, the absurd theatre communicates and offers, the author’s most intimate vision of the human situation, the meaning of existence itself, the author’s own vision of the world. This is the proper subject of absurd theatre, determining its specific form, which is naturally different from the epic theatre form.

The Theatre of the Absurd does not show man in a historical, social or cultural context, it does not communicate any general views of human life. It is not concerned with conveying information or presenting the problems or destinies of characters that exist outside the author’s world. It is not concerned with the representation of events, the narration of fates, or the adventures of characters. It is instead interested in the presentation of an individual’s basic situation. It presents individual human being’s intuition of his basic situation as he experiences it.

The absurd character is in an absolutely different position. He is not formed by his surroundings in his own image; he is not tossing about in the flood of life events and processes. On the contrary, he is isolated, static and motionless, and thus appears and illustrates himself from inside; he is recognized through his own picture of the world he puts before us. The whole stage is symbol showing the inside mental world of the characters, who are organic parts of it. The reality of the situation in which the absurd character appears, is a psychological reality expressed in images that are the outward projection of states of his mind. That is why the Theatre of the Absurd can be considered an image of the human being’s inner world. It presents a true picture of reality itself, reality as apprehended by an individual. In other words: the world exists according to man. It means that the existence of man is not determined by anything external, lying outside of him, e.g. surroundings, history, God’s order, etc; but he is
only himself, he is exclusively his own work, the result of his own decisions and behavior (Abrams 2001:1).

In this sense, it is possible to understand the Theatre of the Absurd as a return to what was, for the first time in Greek philosophy formulated by the Sophist philosophers. They diverted human interest from nature and directed it at man and his thinking. This interest in a subject, individual human thinking, and the individual’s situation corresponds with the philosophy of existentialism (Heidegger, Jaspers, Camus, Sartre), which is focused on the subjective, individual’s experience in a concrete fatal situation. While the philosophers deal with the absurdity of human existence rationally, using philosophical language; the absurd dramatists and novelists express it in concrete picture. They offer us the opportunity to not only think about absurdity, but to feel it and experience it simultaneously with the actors and the author, who transforms his mind into a symbolic language and picture.

(Wikipedia)

1.6 Contribution of The Absurd Writers to Literature:

The term ‘Absurd’ was used for the first time in Albert Camus’ book, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and was applied to Human situation in his novel *The Outsider* (1943). The term, in its relevance to drama and fiction; Kenner, Hugh (1996:42) says:

“It reflects the attitude that there is no purpose 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 becomes 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.”

The works of Sartre and Kafka influenced the Absurdist Movement. Beckett, Ionesco, Camus, Pinter are the exponents of this type of literature. In absurdist drama or novel all semblance of logical construction, of the rational linking of idea with an intellectually viable argument is abandoned, and instead the irrationality of experience is transferred to the stage. Eugene Ionesco (1912 - ) is a Rumanian born dramatist,
writing in French. He is a leading figure in the Theatre of the Absurd. Arthur Adamov (1908-1970) was a Russian born dramatist, who lived in France and wrote in French. It was in his autobiographical volume. Jean Genet (1910-1986) is a famous French novelist, dramatist, and poet. Genet has been classified both as a dramatist of the Absurd and as a follower of art and in his ritualistic Theatre of cruelty. Harold Pinter (1930- ) is an English dramatist, who evolved his own sort of ‘Comedy of Menace’, having his characters numerous but horrifically menaced by mysterious outsider. His works show a further shift into social comedy which still has about it a distinctive flavor of the absurd. Edward Albee (1928 - ) is an American playwright. His early one-act plays are brilliant absurdist analyses of contemporary social and psychological tensions.

(Wikipedia)

1.6.1 Beckett’s Contribution to Literature:

Dramatic works

Theatre
- Eleutheria (1940s; published 1995)
- Waiting for Godot (1953)
- Act Without Words I (1956)
- Act Without Words II (1956)
- Endgame (1957)
- Krapp's Last Tape (1958)
- Rough for Theatre I (late 1950s)
- Rough for Theatre II (late 1950s)
- Happy Days (1961)
- Play (1963)
- Come and Go (1965)
- Breath (1969)
- Not I (1972)
- That Time (1975)
- Footfalls (1975)
- Neither (1977) (An "opera", music by Morton Feldman)
- A Piece of Monologue (1980)
- Rockaby (1981)
- Ohio Impromptu (1981)
- Catastrophe (1982)
- What Where (1983)

Radio
- All That Fall (1957)
- From an Abandoned Work (1957)
- Embers (1959)
- Rough for Radio I (1961)
- Rough for Radio II (1961)
- Words and Music (1961)
- Cascando (1962)

Television
- Eh Joe with Jack McGowan (1965)
- Beginning To End with Jack McGowan (1965)
- Ghost Trio (1975)
- ... but the clouds ... (1976)
- Quad I + II (1981)
- Nacht und Träume (1982)
- Beckett Directs Beckett (1988/92)
- The San Quentin Drama Workshop

Cinema
- Film (1965)

Prose collections and longer works

Novels
- Dream of Fair to Middling Women (1932; published 1992)
- Murphy (1938)

Stories
- More Pricks Than Kicks (1934)
- First Love (1945)
- Stories and Texts for Nothing
In 1945, Beckett returned to Dublin for a brief visit. During his stay, he had a revelation in his mother’s room; his entire future direction in literature appeared to him. Beckett had felt that he would remain forever in the shadow of Joyce, certain to never best him at his own game. His revelation prompted him to change direction and to acknowledge both his own stupidity and his interest in ignorance and importance:

“I realized that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, in control of one’s material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I realized that my own way in impoverishment, in
lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding.”

(Beckett, Proust, 1931:5).

Knowlson (1998:10) argues that “Beckett was rejecting the Joycean principle that knowing more was a way of creatively understanding the world and controlling it……. In future, his work would focus on poverty, failure, exile and loss - as he put it, on man as a ‘non-knower’ and as a ‘non-can-er’. The revelation has rightly been regarded as a pivotal moment in his entire career. Beckett fictionalized the experience in his play *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958). While listening to a tape he made earlier in his life, Krapp hears his younger self say “clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most”, at which point Krapp fast-forwards the tape (before the audience can hear the complete revelation). Beckett later explained to Knowlson that the missing words on the tape are “precious ally”.

In 1946, Jean-Paul Sartre’s magazine Les Temps Modernes published the first part of Beckett’s short story *Suite* (later to be called *La fin, or the End*, not realizing that Beckett had only submitted the first half of the story; Simone de Beauvoir refused to publish the second part. Beckett also began to write his fourth novel, *Mercier et Camier*, which was not published until 1970. The novel presaged his most famous work, the play *Waiting for Godot* (1953), which was written not long afterwards. More importantly, the novel was Beckett’s first long work that he wrote in French, the language of most of his subsequent works, including the famous *Trilogy* of novels: *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*. Despite being a native English speaker, Beckett wrote in French because - as he himself claimed - it was easier for him thus to write “without style”.

*Murphy*(1938), Beckett’s first complete novel, was published in English in 1938. Up to this point he had published only poems, essays, short stories and reviews. Thus *Murphy* marks the beginning of his career as a novelist. It was written while he was a self-imposed exile in London, during the years from 1933 to 1935. While there he visited a doctor friend who worked at a mental institution, located on the border of Kent and Surrey. Beckett's reaction to this experience was the seed of *Murphy*. Of all his novels, this work is the most conventional in terms of the traditional idea of the novel’s form. The characters move in the easily recognizable worlds of London, Dublin and Cork. They all have immediately identifiable human likes and dislikes, and, though the plot is loose, the story moves fluidly from beginning to end.
Watt (1953), Beckett's second novel, was written between 1942 and 1944, but was not published until 1953. In this novel the protagonist, Watt, has acquired the idiosyncrasies which will be assumed by all Beckett's future heroes. He is obsessed by mathematical permutations and combinations, talks very little, and behaves in an abnormal way by conventional social standards. The extreme difficulty Watt has of communicating verbally with his fellow-man is one of the more puzzling traits of the Beckettian heroes, in general. The greater implications of this inability will not be explored, in depth, until one reaches the final novel of the trilogy.

Watt is even more concerned than *Murphy* with the Cartesian ideas concerning the dualism of mind and body. In the totally irrational world of Mr. Knott, Watt tries ceaselessly to impose:

“What Descartes implied and Hegel stated: 'the real is rational and the rational real.”

(Cohn, 2006:69).

In keeping with Beckett's primary artistic premise, Watt fails to make sense of the Knott-world. Since his failure is a result of trying to impress order on chaos, it is ironic that he spends his final years in a lunatic asylum. There, he represents chaos in an ordered world of routine and habit.

At this stage in his career, Beckett began to write in French. Between 1946 and 1950 he wrote four stories, six poems, two plays, thirteen texts and some art criticism. Beckett said:

“I took up writing again, in French---”,

"With the desire of impoverishing myself still further That was the purpose.”

(Cohn, 1998:59).

His trilogy, *Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable*, is numbered among these. All of the trilogy but *The Unnamable*, which was published in 1953, were published in 1951. The English translations are Beckett's own, except for *Molloy*, on which Patrick Bowles collaborated.

Raymond Federman (2002:24) has stated that Beckett’s fiction

“Follows a culminating process that draws towards a single image, a single
expression, repeated stubbornly to an irrational infinity.”

Perhaps the process might be said to have been initiated by Belacqua, the hero of a collection of short stories published in 1934, entitled *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934). Belacqua Shuah is a man who finds living up to his responsibilities an extremely boring and uninteresting affair. His main concern and source of wonder is himself and he views the rest of the world with an indifferent, and at times, an indulgent, eye.

All Beckett’s fictional heroes have a penchant for idleness. In his desire to live in his mind rather than the world, Murphy frequently has recourse to rocking in his rocking-chair for hours an end. Malone writes his tale from his bed. Molloy interrupts his journey to his mother and avails himself of Lousse's offer to reside with her indefinitely. For approximately one year he seems quite content to spend his days there, doing nothing more strenuous than eating, sleeping, and taking the occasional constitutional walk in her garden. Murphy more clearly defines the symbolic overtones of Beckett's use of Belacqua. For him "Belacqua bliss" is found in what he calls the second zone of the mind:

“Here the pleasure was contemplation. This system had no other mode in which to be out of joint and therefore did not need to be put right in this. Here was the Belacqua bliss and others scarcely less precise.”

(Beckett, 1938:3).

For Watt, the purpose of contemplation is to rationalize his world. In the later novels Beckett, alters the mental perspective of his people so that their contemplation serves only to provoke recognition of the anguish of man’s fate.

In the characters' persistent attempts to analyze and interpret the human condition, one thing becomes clear to the reader. The Beckettian heroes are unwilling to have faith in any code of ethics or normative system of morals other than those which they can establish for themselves. Like Descartes, however, their first step in rationalizing anything is to doubt its validity. Cartesian philosophy echoes throughout Beckett's novels. Descartes (2005: 110) and the Beckettian heroes alike seem to believe with Francis Bacon that "the entire work of the understanding must be begun
afresh, and the mind itself is, from the start, not left to take its own course, but be
guided step by step."

A further attribute which the protagonists share is their inability to coordinate
mind and body so that they may function as part of one integrated system. Descartes'
influence may again be perceived. He denied the possibility of interaction between
body and self, not only because of their utter diversity of nature but also because, if by
their wills people initiated movement in their bodies, they would create and
communicate an ever-increasing quantity of motion additional to the amount
originally imparted and declared constant. This belief led him to the conclusion that
the two states, mental and physical remain ever distinct, no change in either causing a
change in the other. This dichotomy between mind and body, which so puzzled
Descartes and forced him to conclude that the self's union with the body is
discoverable but not understandable, is one which haunts Murphy.

He criticizes the alleged consciousness of effort, saying that one's body, the
occasion" for one to perceive other bodies, is an instrument mediating between the
sale efficient cause and one's thought. Like his contemporary Malebranche, Geulincx
insisted that only private thoughts belong to the individual, whereas the body
functions as part of the material world, and any connection that may exist between
mind and body is achieved through the power of God. Though none of Beckett's
heroes confesses to any firm or "formal belief in a Christian God, merely blaspheming
occasionally, they are indifferent, to the point of absurdity, to their bodies. As they
retreat further into the realms of their own minds, they observe and allow their bodies
to deteriorate simultaneously.

Wittgenstein introduced a new theory which attempted to show that reality as
a whole cannot be described, and that the limits of the possible are shown in the
language as a whole. But what is shown in the language as a whole cannot itself be
said in language.

The most creative period of Beckett's literary career is the years between 1947
and 1950. Not the least among the fruits of his labours accomplished in a Paris
apartment were, *En Attendant Godot* and the trilogy, *Molloy, Malone Dies, The
Unnamable*. Perhaps of all Beckett’s work, the trilogy could be said to condense his
creative vision. In terms of the texts themselves, one becomes aware of a refining
process which begins in the character of Molloy and which is completed finally in that
of the Unnamable. The heroes of the three novels live in their worlds and are seen to
come gradually to an understanding of those elements of human existence which must be disposed of in order to know the self. Molloy will reject learning, for example, and Moran rejects order and habit. All the codes and rules which man institutes for himself in order to function successfully in a social environment are dispensed with, until in *The Unnamable* the sole remaining constant is the self, free of all external influences.

As in *Play* (1963), a one-act play which repeats itself in toto during the course of the performance, there is a definite sense of circularity in the three novels which comprise the trilogy. In the natural processes of birth, life and death, the latter is assumed to end that process. However, in the world of the trilogy, we can make no such assumption. Death, as we know it, does not exist for Beckett's heroes, despite the fact that they long for that state. The Unnamable points this out and confirms the quality of circularity, when in a discussion with himself about death he says:

"For it has happened to me many times already without their having granted me as much as a brief sick-leave among the worms before resurrecting me."

(342).

It appears that the ultimate end which mankind has always either feared or anticipated is no longer a valid and concrete concept. The characters in the trilogy must go on living, anyway.

In order to have a complete understanding of the general thematic concerns of the trilogy it is necessary to view the three separate novels as making up one complete whole. There are a number of external and textual reasons for doing so. Beckett himself would not allow the novels to be published separately, and was prepared to wait until one publisher was willing to take responsibility for all three. Looking back on his efforts, Beckett has said that he wrote the three volumes with difficulty:

"But with plan, in sort of enthusiasm…
Malone came from Molloy, the Unnamable Came from Malone."

(Cohn, 1998:112).

Aside from the external evidence to support the view of the trilogy as one integrated work, there is much within the text which relates and links the three novels.
All the characters take responsibility for the creation of at least one other previous character.

Beckett is most famous for his play *Waiting for Godot* (1953). In a much-quoted article, the critic Vivian Mercier (1996:9) wrote that Beckett:

“Has achieved a theoretical impossibility
- a play in which nothing happens, that
yet keeps audiences glued to their seats.
What’s more, since the second act is a
subtly different reprise of the first, he has
written a play in which nothing happens,
twice”.

Like most of his works after 1947, the play was first written in French with the title *En attendant Godot*. Beckett worked on the play between October 1948 and January 1949. He published it in 1952 and it premiered in 1953; an English translation appeared two years later. The play was a critical, popular, and controversial success in Paris. It opened in London in 1955 to mainly negative reviews, but the tide turned with positive reactions from Harold Hobson in ‘The Sunday Times’, and, later, Kenneth Tynan. In the United States, it flopped in Miami and had a qualified success in New York City. After this, the play became extremely popular, with highly successful performances in the US and Germany. It is frequently performed today.

Beckett translated all of his works into English himself, with the exception of *Molloy*, for which he 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 Publisher’s Formentor Prize in recognition of his work, which he shared that year with Jorge Luis Borges.

(Wikipedia)

### 1.7 Statement of the Topic of the 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’, ‘Molly’, ‘Malone Dies’, ‘The Unnamable’, ‘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, Beckett’s fame and potential as an absurd novelist needs to be covered. Hence, the present research work concentrates on absurdity evident in Beckett’s select novels.

Absurdity 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. 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.

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.

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 selected novels. The statement of the topic of the present research study is made: ABSURDITY IN SAMUEL BECKETT’S SELECT NOVELS.

1.8 Need and Significance of the Study:

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 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.

1.9 Aim and Objectives of the Study:

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.

1.10 Hypothesis of the Study:

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.

1.11 Scope and Limitations of the Study:

Scope of the Study:

The researcher proposes to study and analyse the following four novels by Samuel Beckett. The researcher has strictly confine himself to the analysis and interpretation the four selected novels by Samuel Beckett -

1. *Molloy* (1951)
2. *The Malone Dies* (1951)
3. *The Unnamable* (1953)
4. *Murphy* (1938)
The researcher has referred to the works of the same writer in particular in his plays and works of other writers, as and when necessary.

The present study attempted to bring out the elements of absurdism in the novels by Samuel Beckett. There is a vast scope to extend the area of research to other distinguished writers that belong to the “Absurd” Movement of literature. Some of the potential areas of the research are indicated below:

1. The study of Absurdity in Harold Pinter’s play.
2. The study of Absurdity in Eugene Ionesco’s play.
3. The study of Absurdity in Arthur Adamov’s play.
4. The study of Absurdity in Edward Albee’s play.
5. The study of Absurdity in Jean Genet’s play.
6. The study of Absurdity in Jean Paul Sartre’s play.
7. The study of Absurdity in Franz Kafka’s play.
8. The study of Absurdity in Albert Camus’s play.
10. The study of Absurdity in Waiting for Godot and Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf’s play.

These are just some of the pointers to the possible areas in which research can be conducted on the lines which are pursued in the present study or on similar lines. The areas of research in respect of Absurd Movement of literature are immense and the potential of the research is in exhaustible.

**Limitations:**

Though the present project will explore the absurdity, self–identification and human interrelationship in the characters in the novels and occasionally in the plays of Samuel Beckett, it will not explore the works of other absurd writers in detail. Other perspectives of absurdists may not be discussed in detailed manner. The primary focus of the study will be on the above mentioned four novels of the writer and other works by him will referred only if it is found necessary.

1. The limitation of the study is the choice of the single author - Samuel Beckett.
2. The study is limited by the number of text chosen for analytical discussion of absurdism. There are four novels chosen to study Samuel Beckett’s treatment of absurdism.
3. The study is limited by the approach to be adopted for discussion of absurdism at traced in the four novels of Beckett.
4. The study is limited by methodological constraints of critical literary analysis of the novelistic elements such as theme, character, plot, structure, setting, point of view and style, as and when necessary.

5. The study is limited by the physical constraints of time and space to be followed to maintain the academic disciplines.

1.12 Research Methodology

The present study is related to one of the most influential literary movements of the later twentieth century that is Absurdism. The absurdist works particularly in the forms of drama and novel record a reaction to the post war situation in the west. The theoretical and conceptual discussion of the term “Absurdism” is methodologically attempted. The theoretical framework and the textual output have been analyzed with reference to the discipline of literary analysis, which is specific to the genre of the novel through the analysis of the text in terms of measure novelistic elements such as theme, plot, character, structure, setting, point of view, narrative technique, and style as and under necessary. This requires the use of the literary method. Along with the literary method, the investigatory method has been used to investigate and trace the presence of the absurdism in novelistic elements of the four selected novels by Samuel Beckett. The literary text are thoroughly analyzed and proper evaluative judgements on the works with reference to absurdism have been offered. This shows that the present study has made use of the literary method and the method of critical literary analysis. The stages of description, investigation, interpretation, analysis and evaluation have been duly followed in the use of the critical method of literary analysis.

The data will be collected from primary as well as from secondary sources the data available in the print media as well as in the non print media has used. The primary sources of the study are the four selected novels by Samuel Beckett. The secondary sources are the critical studies of Samuel Beckett’s literary output. His biographical studies have used as data to be used for investigation. The background materials as well as the material for theoretical and literary backgrounds have collected from books, journals, articles, newspapers and other periodicals. The reference material has collected from reference works like, encyclopedia, dictionaries, yearbooks, preceding reports and relevant works.
In addition to print material, the use of audio visual material has been, whenever necessary. Electronic media like internet has copiously handled.

1.13 Research Design / Plan of Work

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.

Molloy, 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 through 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.

Descriptive and analytical methods in particular and other methods as when necessary will be used, while assessing the select novels.

1.14 Review of Literature:

1.15.1 The critical industry that has grown up around Beckett has reached epidemic proportions. Beckett studies have encompassed the whole panorama of critical responses since the late 1950s. Few critics seem to be aware that they might take a hint from the author himself, and his disdain for academic prose. He declared:

“I feel the only line is to refuse to be involved in exegesis of any kind.....
We have no elucidations to offer of mysteries that are all of their own making”.

44
By largely keeping silent Beckett has left everyone free to invent his or her own interpretation of the work. One of the most important factors in changing the focus of Beckett studies in recent years has been the appearance of reliable biographical studies by Knowlson and Anthony Cronin (TLS, September 27th, 1996). This has helped the rediscovery of Beckett as a man, as opposed to an intellectual, and caused a re-evaluation of his indebtedness to other arts, especially music and painting. It also draws renewed attention to Beckett’s acute awareness of history and religion. The latter path has in recent years become the most rewarding for research.

1.15.2 In the late 1950s, Beckett met the artist Avigdor Arikha, twenty-three years his junior. They were to become close friends. When the artist married Anne Atik, a poet who worked at the Paris Review, she became part of Beckett’s circle. The couple offered the older writer a refuge where he could talk about those aspects of his life that gave him solace, particularly art and music. Drawing from her memories and from notes taken throughout the 1960s and late 1970s, Anne Atik has produced and elegant and highly personal memoir, *How It Was* (1970), richly illustrated with drawings, photographs, manuscripts and letter holographs, which will be a valuable addition to every Beckett collection.

*Atik* (1970) draws attention to the importance of Beckett’s visual culture, and emphasizes the central place of music in his private life, and with it the musicality of his prose and personal diction. We see Beckett moving towards an appreciation of deep feeling expressed simply in all art forms rejecting the architecture of Bach and the heavy orchestration of Mahler and Wagner; favouring the simplicity of German Lieder and chamber music, particularly Schubert. He feared erudition that swamped the authenticity of a work. Beckett recited poetry often, paying particular attention to rhythm and pronunciation, ranging from Walther von der Vogelweide and Keats to Shakespeare and Yeats. Atik also reiterates the importance of the Bible to Beckett’s culture. He read it in four languages and along with it a concordance and the Book of Common Prayer. The differences in translations of the Bible are briefly outlined, as are the traces of its cadences and stories found in Beckett’s work. His fascination with Joyce, Dante, Johnson and others are all
elucidated, but Atik throughout insists on Beckett’s refusal to intellectualize, dissect, or analyze works which touched him deeply. Though some of Atik’s conclusions are open to debate, her book is both enjoyable and informative. Throughout this fascinating memoir, Beckett is profoundly human, capable of weeping at the Lord’s prayer and slipping into closed silence when his feelings ran too deep to express; his learning worn lightly, yet an intrinsic part of the man. This is juxtaposed with a profound concern for others and great generosity.

1.15.3 Beckett moved closer and closer to silence and yet subverted all the genres he worked in. Ihab Hassan wrote in *The Literature of Silence*. Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett that both these writers became practitioners of a kind of anti-literature in which language eventually exhausted its power to express. Hassan (2001: 12) remarks of Beckett that:

“His silence, despite its grim, satiric note, has something in common with the silence of holy men, who after knowing pain and outrage; reach for a peace beyond human understanding”.

Despite their obvious differences both these writers filled their books with biblical allusions and an intense concern with human suffering, and both have characters that identify closely with Christ and God. Miller was supposed to have been born on Christ’s birthday and Beckett claimed to have been born on the day of Christ’s death. His religious upbringing and study in form Beckett’s entire corpus. This, and his knowledge of world religions, particularly Buddhism, has formed an important theme in Beckett studies in recent years. Mary Bryden, who also played a central role in discussing Beckett’s relationship to music, gave us the notable Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God.

1.15.4 Lois Gordon (1996: 41-50) follows the trend of many recent Beckett critics by underscoring the religious overtones in Beckett's work. However, her book *Reading “Godot”* is much more than it might at first seem. It aims to put Beckett’s major dramatic work in historical, philosophical, biographical and literary context, and in so doing it may open up a whole new area of debate.
Written in a highly literate style, this book is important reading for everyone interested in Beckett. Its emphasis on Beckett’s relationship to Freud, French literature and the socio-cultural history of the 1930s and 1940s allows us to see Waiting for Godot as a natural outcome of Beckett’s confrontation with his own psyche. The identification of his characters with Christ and Cain and Abel is explored, as are Beckett’s own existential dilemma and the complex nature of his relationship with God.

The exploration of Beckett’s milieu in the 1930s may still prove a deeply rewarding avenue of research. One of Beckett’s fellow contributors to transition - the novelist, poet and philosopher Michael Fraenkel, whose work Beckett probably knew - is a good example. Fraenkel was obsessed with the spiritual death of modern man and the difficulty and pain of living in the modern age.

1.15.5 Lois Gordon and Anne Atik, is at pains to stress the literary influences on Beckett, an area which has sometimes been seen simplistically, or ignored in favour of the philosophical. Following up insightful early comments by Edwin Muir and Kenneth Rexroth are about Beckett’s connection to eighteenth century literature. Smith shows, in a convincing and detailed study, that Beckett was extremely familiar with this literature and returned to it all his life. As he moved away from Joyce’s method, Beckett sought a way to maintain his own originality in the face of the literary voices that echoed in his mind. Smith argues that he faced a problem that had already haunted the eighteenth-Century authors he admired, particularly Johnson, Swift and Sterne how to be original, given the weight of tradition. Beckett, like Pope, felt that the essential nature of the great artist was his heroic struggle in the face of life’s tragedy. Stimulating, meticulously reached, Beckett’s eighteenth century is the first book-length study of Beckett’s involvement with eighteenth-century literature and argues convincingly that part of his originality is derived precisely from his study of these writers.

1.15.6 Beckett studies gained its first real impetus back in 1959 when Ruby Cohn devoted an issue of perspective to his writing and declared his importance in the face of some opposition. Over the decades Cohn has modified her early views on Beckett, but always remained a potent force in interpreting his work.
Sometimes - condemned for her so called Humanist Stance. Cohn refuses to impose coherence on the many strands of Beckett’s life, personality and work. A Beckett Canon is intended for those who have been drawn to his work in print or performance and want to explore it further. With no thesis to uphold, the book proceeds chronologically through Beckett’s published and unpublished works. Cohn’s approach is intensely personal, the fruit of decades of research, and her book provides a unique resource to accompany and enrich our reading of Beckett’s book and scripts. Providing context and informed discussion and interpretation both of well-known and obscure or unpublished texts, Ruby Cohn is to be praised for her inclusiveness. Although some may disagree with her interpretations and chronology, every serious Beckett scholar will want to own this book. Extensive attention has been paid to manuscript holdings in university collections and the resulting study is the first book to attempt to encompass the entire body of Beckett’s oeuvre. It will be invaluable to specialist, but also remains a readable and inviting volume, an essential reference for those less familiar readers.

(Wikipedia)

1.15 Summing up:

Thus, Samuel Beckett is not only a great poet, dramatist but also a great novelist. If we see his life it was not easy to live in those unbearable circumstances. His college education in Trinity College, Dublin and his acquaintance with French and Italian and his being a brilliant student as well as a sportsman are some of the most remarkable features of his life. His meeting James Joyce can be termed as the turning point of his career as a litterrey artist. He wrote poems, dramas, novels, short stories and radio plays. As he thought French suitable for expression, he wrote first in French and then translated the work into English.

His literary scholarship brought him many hounours including the newest bridge being named as Samuel Beckett Bridge in Dublin. His contribution to absurd literature is immense. He is basically famous for his absurd dramas, and novels as, he began his career as a novelist. Today he is considered among the galaxy of the great writers like- Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, Franz Kafka and James Joyce.
1.16 Works Cited:
16. *Study Times*.
17. *The Dublin Magazine*.