CHAPTER IV

Waiting for Godot: The Incommunicable Essence.
Waiting for Godot: The incommunicable essence.

In *Waiting for Godot* we find a straight focus on language. Beckett has created here a theatre of language of his own. It is an accepted fact that a strong centrality of language is the hallmark of all Beckettian plays. The dramatist felt that the reality of living has moved far ahead of what could be expressed by the conventional cliches, jargons and phrases that have lost true-to-life authenticity having been used too frequently and too carelessly. Jargons tend to bury their precise meaning under the heaps of other intentions, involving the speaker's desire in order to either hoodwink, seduce, impress or persuade. Beckett rejected the beaten-track linguistic pursuits finding them incapable of expressing certain acutely felt scintillating human experience attained especially under the impact of
Existentialism. This is because the range of familiar vocabulary is far too limited. The basic raw material of Waiting for Godot is the cross-current of human awareness and sensibility vis-à-vis the metamorphosed socio-economic and psychological worldly reality.

The two destitutes of the play, Vladimir and Estragon, find themselves outsiders in this world and they are incapable of recording anything more than mere beginnings of impulses, desires, thoughts, moods, memories and impressions. Everything that arises in them sinks into oblivion before getting at any point of arrival:

Vladimir: Show.
Estragon: There's nothing to show.
Vladimir: Try and put it on again ....
Estragon: What?
Vladimir: Suppose we repented.
Estragon: Repented what?
Vladimir: Oh ... (He reflects) we wouldn't have to go into the details.
Estragon: Our being born?
(Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted).
Vladimir: One don't even laugh any more.
Estragon: Dreadful privation.
Vladimir: Merely smile (I, p. 11).

These two tramps live in what may be called a twilight state of consciousness. Though Vladimir has some more awareness in him than Estragon, an inertia prevails over both of them. These two tramps fall into the category which is commonly known in Beckett's Paris as 'clochards' (in other words those downtroddens who have known better times and have had considerable education and culture — the English synonym is 'vagrant' and the American one is 'hobo'). Clochards make a point of being rejects of destiny, in terms with their own position as recluse or an outsider. In the beginning of Act I of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir speaks of losing heart comparing the
past with the present, and hints at suicide:

We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties ... Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up (I, p. 10).

Although it is difficult to deduce the playwright's intention to any clear-cut proposition, yet any careful audience is immediately struck by Beckett's use of symbol, pointing towards humanity falling into the void. But Beckett's void constitutes man's certain reality, and is so active as to make the world seem illusory. Nothing is certain but the void, the error, and the idiotic rat race, in which everyman seems to take part, to a gross purposelessness:

Vladimir: We wait. We are bored .... we are bored to death, there's no denying it .... In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! (He broods) (II, p. 81).
Edward Albee (1928-) questions the very meaning of life in his powerful one-act play *The Zoo Story* (1963). At a point of the play, one of the two characters Jerry says:

> Are these the things men fight for? Tell me, Peter, is this bench, this iron and this wood, is this your honour? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd?\(^1\)

Albee too is referring to this Beckettian void or Nothingness of the human reality. Beckett's search for reality, urged by a genuine disapproval of the acceptance of the facade (make-believe) for reality, pin-points world-negation and self-annihilation. However, Beckett's "Nothingness" is altogether different from negatively used terms like Sartre's "Naught" (non-being or nothingness) and Hemingway's "Nada".\(^2\)
In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett demonstrates how all civilized traditions deeply regress, and how human consciousness sinks back into an earlier state of its development. According to the psychologist C.G. Jung (1875-1961) such a regression is connected with the dissolution of human conscious personality into its functional components. This regressive force heavily permeates Beckett's oeuvre. Lucky and Pozzo, the two secondary characters of the play, disintegrate from the first Act to the next, like as the characters of Beckett's novels do — such as Murphy, Molloy and Malone.\(^3\) In *Waiting for Godot*, as far as action is concerned, practically nothing happens or nothing concrete is done. No dramatic development is visible. There is hardly any beginning or an end. Even the set on the stage conveys practically nothing. The only specific object found in the play is a tree — only a skeleton tree without a single leaf.
It is worthwhile to point out in this connection that Beckett rejects naturalism as decisively as has been done by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), although for a different reason. Brecht considers that a theatre of illusion encourages the audience to accept life as it is, and to respond happily to the events, instead of trying to comprehend as to why these events take some definite course. If the world is supposed to change the course of events, the point of drama for Brecht is to bring the change nearer. So much so that life as it is, can be replaced by a life as it 'may be' or 'should be' (it refers to the Aristotelian moral 'should'). However, Beckett's way of thinking is far removed from Brecht's. As Renold Gaskell has pertinently observed, Beckett's rejection of naturalism follows from his:

rejection of the naturalistic vision of the world; more exactly, from his contempt for
the assumption that change in time, the life of human action, has significance enough to be worth representing on the stage. 4

Gaskell further elucidates by saying that: For Beckett change has no significance or, as the circular structure of Godot implies, amounts to little more than repetition. Man is part of the process of nature, and the process of nature, and the process of nature is a nameless cycle — spring, summer, autumn, winter; morning, noontime, evening, night — which insults the mind by its futile merry-go-round. 5 What the intricate pattern of Beckett's monologues and dialogues hint at, in Waiting for Godot, is that although the characters may not have any forward movement or apparent locomotion, and although their senses may be decaying, nevertheless, they are shot through with an acute awareness of their own self which continually torments them. The final moment in the Waiting for Godot as also in
the *Endgame* implies an eternal recurrence of human condition — man's eternal predicament.

Two men Vladimir and Estragon are on the stage. Nothing of their chronological age, family, social background and profession or calling has been mentioned by the playwright, which is exactly the practice noticed in the Absurd plays of Harold Pinter — a renowned follower of Beckett. Vladimir and Estragon have no home to go:

Vladimir (hurt, coldly): May one enquire where. His Highness spent the night?
Estragon: In a ditch.
Vladimir: (admiringly): A ditch! Where?
Estragon (without gesture): Over there.
Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?
Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.
Vladimir: The same lot as usual?
Estragon: The same? I don't know (I, p. 9).

In short, they are tramps whiling away their time, waiting for a saviour to rescue them from
misery. On the surface they seem to be comparatively unscathed or unharmed. While one takes off his boots, the other talks of the Gospels. They are eating carrot. They don't mean to say anything to each other. They don't communicate. They address each other by two diminutives "Gogo" and "Didi", which again do not suggest any identifiable names. But by calling each other these childish names, they seem to ease the tension of their situation, because they are full of frustration and resentment. They tend to cling together with a mixture of interdependence and affection:

Vladimir: I didn't get up in the night, not once!
Estragon: (sadly) You see, you piss better when I'm not there.
Vladimir: I missed you ... and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a queer thing?
Estragon: (shocked). Happy?
Vladimir: Perhaps it's not the right word.
Estragon: And now?
Vladimir: Now? ... (Joyous). There you are again ... (Indifferent). There we are again ... (Gloomy). There I am again.
Estragon: You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone, too.
Vladimir: (vexed). Then why do you come crawling back?
Estragon: I don't know            (II, p. 59).
Eva Metman, a theatre director in Germany, points out "this uninspired symbiosis seems to display a concept of friendship which Beckett attributes to Proust". Metman also considers that Beckett situates friendship somewhere between fatigue and ennui. Vladimir and Estragon turn first to the left, then to the right and pretend to go — to leave each other. Yet as it happens, they always come back to each other in the middle of the stage, and can't really go away. For they are waiting for someone, called "Godot", about whom the audience knows nothing, except that he won't come. The futility of their waiting, however, is clear to the audience from the very beginning. So no one is surprised when a messenger, evidently from the rescuer, ("Godot") arrives and announces that "Godot" will come on the next day. Then the light on the stage suddenly dims, and it is
night. The two tramps decide to go away, to return again on the next day. Yet they remain stationary and do not move. The curtain falls.

Earlier during the course of Act I, two other characters, a cruel master Pozzo and his half-demented vessel Lucky, cross the path of the two tramps. Pozzo sits down on a camp-stool, eats the leg of a cold chicken, smokes a pipe and gives a colourful description of twilight. Pozzo, whip in hand, drives Lucky "by means of a rope passed round his neck" (I, p. 21). On command, Lucky executes a few grotesque acts by way of a "dance" and gives out in gabbles an incomprehensible speech in disconnected fragments made up of stammerings and stutterings.

In Act II, the waiting continues. The decor remains unchanged, except for that
now "the tree has four or five leaves"

(II, p. 57). Didi (Vladimir) sings a song about a dog: "A dog came in the kitchen / And stole a crust of bread"  

(II, p. 57). The dog gets killed and buried. On his tomb it is inscribed that "A dog came in the kitchen / And stole a crust of bread / Then cook up with a ladle. And beat him till he was dead"

(II, p. 57). After sometime Pozzo and Lucky return. "Pozzo is blind"  

(II, p. 77), and as it transpires from the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon, he remembers nothing. Lucky remains dumb. The same little messenger is back with the same message that "Godot" will turn up the next day. Once more night re-establishes itself: "The sun sets, the moon rises"  

(II, p. 92). Estragon and Vladimir would like to try to hang themselves — the branches of the tree ought to be strong enough
to take their weight. However, as they do not possess a suitable "cord" for this purpose, they decide to go away and come back again the next day. But they remain stationary and do not move. The curtain falls.

The audience is captivated by the grotesqueness of what it is witnessing, and begins to hope for a turn of events, a twist or a solution which never comes. Frederick Lumley has significantly observed that Waiting for Godot "combines many styles into a single mood; it has elements of circus and pantomime, philosophical musings and attempts at existentialist suicides (which is doomed to failure)". He further continues that "we meet on some strange no-man's land two down and outs, Vladimir and Estragon. Their conversation leads them nowhere, nothing happens, their minds and their bodies remain numb as they wait, every
night, for the stranger". The following excerpt elucidates Lunlop's views:

Estragon: Let's go.
Vladimir: We can't.
Estragon: Why?
Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
Estragon: Ah! (a moment's reflection). You are sure it was here?
Vladimir: What?
Estragon: That we are to wait.
Vladimir: He said by the tree (he looks at the tree). Do you see any others?
Estragon: What is it?
Vladimir: I don't know. A willow.
Estragon: Where are the leaves?
Vladimir: It must be dead (I, p. 14).

Beckett wants his audience to experience this suffering of an extreme despair, about which he gives some idea in his essay on Proust. Beckett is artistically concerned with the more cruel and precise expression of suffering than "the concious estimate of the sufferer who is spared at least one despair, the despair of the spectator".
In analysing Beckett's drama, it should be carefully considered that Beckett has gone too far, than any of his contemporaries, in making a daring experiment in the new development in drama, especially at the level of the dramatic language. Dramatic art has always concerned itself with man's relation to the great archetypal powers which can determine his attitude to life. However, in the late Twentieth century drama, especially under the impact of existentialism, a new orientation has been crystallized. According to this orientation, man is shown in a world where archetypal powers, either divine or devilish, do not anymore act as a controlling force. Such a belief or conception that man gets guided, protected or punished by any such force including destiny, has been discarded. Under the modern Existentialist concept man is alone, and consequently responsible for whatever he does. As Sartre has explained: "man is nothing other
than he makes himself, he is nothing except his
life. He exists only to the extent he projects
himself towards the future, he is nothing
except the totality of his acts .... Man is
thus responsible for what he does, and is also
responsible for mankind. In choosing for himself,
man chooses for mankind". 10 This new form of
experimental drama, especially as envisaged by
Beckett, forces the audience out of its
conventional habitat of a familiar orientation.
This type of drama "creates a vacuum between
the play and the audience so that the latter is
compelled to experience something itself, be it
a re-awakening of the awareness of archetypal
powers or a re-orientation of the Ego, or
both". 11 This is, once again, what Brecht
calls "alienation effect" that stands for the
condition underlining this vacuum between what
is shown on the stage and the audience. The
vacuum becomes so unbearable that the audience
has no alternative but either to reject, or to be invariably drawn into the fold of the enigmatic plays — such as those as Beckett writes — in which nothing reminds the audience of any given purpose or motivated reaction to the world around him. Alienation effect addresses itself to a definite detachment of the audience from the action of the play so that their critical judgement is aroused, setting-at-naught any emotional satisfaction.

By means of his pattern of the intricate verbal expressiveness in the use of dramatic language in relation to form Beckett in Waiting for Godot rather compels the audience to come out of its familiar conceptual orientation. The playwright creates an idiom which forces the audience to experience something all by itself. It is not much surprising therefore that fourteen hundred convicts of the San Quentin
penitentiary in California, U.S., responded enthusiastically to a performance of "Waiting for Godot", which seemed to be meaningful to them. The offenders could draw on their very empty kind of waiting where nothing-to-think-about carries a permanent threat. To them every happening offered both a promise and a disillusioning repetition of the daily existential round. An illustrative excerpt from the play may be cited:

Estragon: He should be here.
Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon: And if he doesn't come?
Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir: Possibly.
Estragon: And so on.
Vladimir: The point is —

The act of this waiting as registered in Beckett's play makes us aware of an indirect and ambivalent kind of dramatic action, which
holds up a promise to an end of the sense of purpose, as well as of any conclusion. In expressing his ideas about this waiting Kennedy aptly comments:

Waiting, both in life and in drama, can evoke a whole range of experience, from a sense of paralysis to fruitful silence, the empty or the anxious mind trying to cope by inventing distractions. The suspense of melodrama and farce, the long postponements of comedy and the prolonged quest of tragedy (the procrastinations of Hamlet for example) all constitute patterns of waiting.\(^{12}\)

In *Waiting for Godot*, the Beckettian pattern of waiting is an ingenious combination of expectations and let-downs, of uncertainty and of gradual run-down without end. The expectations of Estragon and Vladimir border on the irrational, and under the burden of existential agony their condition do not undergo any change. But the tramps, and no less the spectators, are being kept going by the
playful variations in the pattern of the absurd
waiting, underlined by uncertainties and
ambiguities of meaning and similar qualms
about the destination. For example, in Act I,
Vladimir contemplates on the cherished
traditional hope of being saved:

Vladimir: It'll pass the time. (Pause) Two
thieves, crucified at the same
time as our Saviour. One —

Estragon: Our what?

Vladimir: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is
supposed to have been saved and
the other ... (he searches for
the contrary of saved) ... damned.

Estragon: Saved from what?

Vladimir: Hell (i, p. 12).

John Orr, in his illuminating study on Beckett
has tried to explain the passage:

In Godot, the parallel between the two thieves
and Didi and Gogo gradually dawns on the
audience. Both are damned by a fate they
cannot control and rely on the miracle of a
last minute intervention. In one of the
Gospels one of the thieves is saved, but
here Godot never comes. The parallel, however,
is never a perfect one. The thieves want to
be saved from death, and possibly from hell,
while Didi and Gogo want to be saved from the
boredom of living and discuss the parable to
pass the time.13
The whole sequence as shown above seems to be full of conjectures, not only in performance but also in its critical examination. Vladimir says that one among the three evangelists tells of one thief being saved, and if the silence of the other evangelists may be construed as a kind of truth, then both the thieves could have been damned. We feel that the uncertainty concerning one of the thieves is transferred to the speaker himself who is Vladimir - he attempts to engage Estragon in participating in his own fears (the existential angst,) about the crucial question of salvation, damnation or death. However, Estragon remains unmoved.

The following passage from the play lays bare the existentialist predicament which *Waiting for Godot* likes to bring forth:

Vladimir: One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him....
Estragon: What's all this about? Abused who?
Vladimir: The Saviour.
Estragon: Why?
Vladimir: Because he wouldn't save them.
Estragon: From hell?
Vladimir: Imbecile! From death.
Estragon: I thought you said hell.
Vladimir: From death, from death.
Estragon: Well, what of it?
Vladimir: Then the two of them must have been damned.
Estragon: And why not?
Vladimir: But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.
Estragon: Well? They don't agree, and that's all there is to it.
Vladimir: But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?
Estragon: Who believes him?
Vladimir: Everybody. It's the only version they know.
Estragon: People are bloody ignorant apes
(I, p. 13).

It is noteworthy that "hell" has now been vehemently exchanged for "death" by Vladimir.
The passage leads us to infer that Beckett, by means of his intricate pattern of verbal expressions, seeks to show us the state of modern man in which fear and a nostalgic adherence to past die-hard practices are noticed.
with doubts and bitterness, along with a tired indifference. Man attempts to confront his fellow beings with a deeper awareness of the spiritual void, and this happens to be the central issue in the works of the existentialist writers. This dread of the void behind the smokescreen of doubt and bitterness, alternating with resignation, is the realm of existence where the "suffering of being" might lead to some transition. The passages which describe this mood are examples of the most remarkable poetic expressions in the play. When in Act II blind Pozzo is about to leave, Vladimir asks him to let Lucky sing and think once more:

Pozzo : But he's dumb.
Vladimir: Dumb!
Pozzo : Dumb. He can't even groan.
Vladimir: Dumb! Since when?
Pozzo : (Suddenly furious). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When!
One day, is not that enough for you, one day like any other day, one day
he went dumb, one day I went blind, 
one day we'll go deaf, one day we 
were born, one day we shall die, 
the same day, the same second, is 
that not enough for you?  
(II, p. 89).

Here in this passage quoted above, al' 
on a sudden we find a reference to the feminine. 
As a visionary Pozzo adds:

They give birth astride of a grave, the light 
gleams an instant, then its night once more.  
(II, p. 39).

Beckett's handling of words registers the 
hopeless vision of life as a brilliant moment 
between the womb and the tomb. This is emphasised 
and illustrated by the words, "one day like any 
other day". If one day is like any other day, 
there is nothing but a stale monotonous 
repetition, and as such no transition can 
forcibly occur.
Through a particular, typically Beckettian, dialogic structure, a pattern of questions and uncertainties, has been deftly woven. The quintessence of Beckett’s dramatic art, as revealed in *Waiting for Godot*, may be found in a strange dramatic action which makes an all-out effort to demonstrate the absence of action in the philosophic sense of the term. When we try to closely examine Beckett’s verbal expressiveness in his drama, we can follow the subtle dramatic message that the playwright wants to convey. The subtext of this play refers to the essential position that human beings do wait for the arrival of some one or something with whom they may or may not have any appointment. More often than not, no such appointment is ever fixed, and no one turns up. All human efforts, considerations, assumptions and decisions finally get dissolved into nothingness. As an absurdist playwright
Beckett wants to give voice in his play
to the utter existential despondency that:

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.  

Human situation remains unaltered.
Only that under the impact of existentialism,
the perception has become all the more acute
having stressed the cosmic Shakespearean
apocalyptic statement that life is "a tale
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
signifying nothing" (Macbeth, V). This is
what Beckett, as an absurdist playwright,
wants to dramatize in Waiting for Godot. We
do symbolically identify ourselves with Vladimir
and Estragon, as we too continue to wait like
these two tramps, or try, like Yves, to rush things
madly, trying rather ludicrously to give our life the
semblance of a purposefulness. We try to grapple with
time, in doing one thing or the other "striving
blindly, achieving nothing" (Matthew Arnold, *Rugby
Chapel*). Like W.B. Yeats'纳税人 we also are driven
by a deluding passion to get "stumbled, tumbled,
fumbled" and ultimately get "drowned in the great bog
of cloone" (*The Tower*). In other words this is the
Beckettian bog of nothingness.

But we have a growing knowledge that our
activities are merely肤浅, histrionics without that
final knowledge as to who we are and that we are
supposed to do in this life on earth. Like Pozzo and
Lucky we also are subject to the most sudden turns of
events and reversals of fortune — one day we are strong
and healthy, the other day blind and helpless. Yezlin
has pertinently raised the question:

Are not all our most clever attempts at thinking and
theorising, like Lucky's, ultimately reducible to an
empty rush of meaningless words, and shall we not all
in the end like Lucky, be struck dumb?15

Yezlin wants to pinpoint the issue that as social beings,
we are tied to each other irrevocably — over and above the fact that we may feel apathetic to one another’s company. Homo sapiens are essentially gregarious beings and can never live in isolation, even though continuous contact and interaction produce inevitable confrontation — as between Vladimir and Estragon or Pozzo and Lucky.

It is significant to note that Beckett in his Waiting for Godot has tried to lay out intricate patterns of images of the human condition by means of an equally intricate pattern of verbal expressiveness of the characters. In this play Beckett’s art manifests itself in his power of intertwining the thematic complexity with an equally complex linguistic filigree. This has been done in the same way in which:

the musical themes of a symphony are inter-woven in an infinitely complex pattern of statement and counter-statement, consonance and contrast. 10

Pozzo at a later stage, gets physically deteriorated. Towards the end of Waiting for Godot,
Vladimir sinks into a brown-study in which Pozzo's vision re-emerges with significant addition.

Vladimir asks himself:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with strangon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Codot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? . . . A strider of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the torches. He have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens) but habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at strangon.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying. He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause.) I can't go on! (Pause.) What have I said? (II, p.90-91).

What is noticed here in this passage is that Vladimir becomes movingly aware of a difference between the two possible ways of living life. One in the state of being awake; the other is in the state of a twilight. Vladimir also goes through a realization that he can not go on putting up with an existence in which the womb and the tomb seem like the two demarcated areas which are momentarily lighted up for a human being to make his compulsive existential
sojourn. Andrew Kennedy in his remarkable study has illustrated this point to the extent of discerning the conventional tragic sense:

Pozzo's revelation that he is blind and that Lucky is dumb, and his speech on time and simultaneity of birth and death ("They give birth astride of the grave," p. 89) echo the tones of traditional tragedy. Vladimir in his 'waking sleep' speech, seems to remember the 'astride of a grave' image as he speculates on a possibly infinite series of observers watching each other ("At me too someone is looking" p. 91). Both the Pozzo and the Vladimir speeches transform the action into a dream-like state and contribute to the experience of a 'timeless time' which is prevalent in the whole play.  

But at the very moment, when Vladimir is about to wake up, Godot's boy messenger arrives and destroys the process of consciousness in Vladimir. Godot's function may thus be interpreted to be, in Beckettian terms, to keep those, who depend on Him, in a state of unconscious. Esslin has significantly observed that —

In Beckett's work this tension between the transient, unendingly decaying nature of the material universe and the immaterial aspect of consciousness which incessantly renews itself
in ever-recurring self-perception plays an
important part.18

Our attention has been further drawn to the fact
that:

the more in Beckett's work the material
envelope decays and is stripped away, the
more painful becomes the tension between the
temporal and the infinite.19

That this tension becomes increasingly agonizing
has been dramatically presented by Beckett's use
of language in a very special way. The way
verbal exchanges take place, denotes that in
waiting for Godot the audience is not presented
with any ready-made sequence of events, or with
an evidently intended, easily comprehensible
meaning. On the contrary, Beckett requires his
audience to participate in the events so much so
that it may come up with its own conclusion at
the conceptual level. The dialogue follow a
course mapping out the tangled terrain of
existential predicament. What Beckett intends is
that the manifold strata of meaning will
gradually fall in place, in the mind of the audience, to fuse into a conceivable intricate pattern, to the extent that the audience is able to synchronize and respond to.

In the play when Vladimir says:

At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause) I can't go on! ... (II, p. 91).

What is expressed is a feeble awareness of the sin of unconsciousness, and the notion of any known witness who may as well be any one, even Godot Himself. The words, as Beckett has used them, "at me too someone is looking" indicate connotatively that a spontaneous image has arisen within Vladimir, and that for a short moment, he is outside the sphere of the habitual, conventional expectations. Vladimir is also aware of an inner witness within him, but his awareness of the presence of such a witness within him is something what Vladimir can possibly endure.
In this connection we are reminded of Nietzsche's remark in 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' (1883-92):

The god that saw all, even man — that God could not but die! Man could not endure that such a witness should live.39

Vladimir and Estragon, are impulsively moved towards a direct experience which cannot yet be expressed in any concrete or valid form. This is where we find the significance of Beckett's intricate pattern of verbal idioms, that tries to lay bare this human trauma. Vladimir has a dim awareness of a tragedy, which he kept harping:

we have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries ... But habit is a great deadener (II, p. 91).

Whereas for Estragon, he tries to give voice to what lives in the depths of the mind, and remains suppressed in Vladimir's fear.
In Act I, Estragon falls asleep.

Vladimir makes him awake:

Estragon: (restored to the horror of his situation): I was asleep! (despairingly) why will you never let me sleep?
Vladimir: I felt lonely.
Estragon: I had a dream.
Vladimir: Don't tell me!
Estragon: I dreamt that —
Vladimir: DON'T TELL ME!
Estragon: (Gesture towards the universe). This one is enough for you? (silence).
It's not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private night mares to if I can't tell them to you?
Vladimir: Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that! (I, pp. 15-16).

Just as Vladimir discovers the inner witness, Estragon simultaneously discovers the inner universe. But the interplay of words, between the two figures, prevents any lasting move towards consciousness. C.G. Jung puts the question:

Why have we not long since discovered the unconscious, and raised up its treasure-house of eternal images? Simply because we had a religious formula for everything psychic — and one that is far more beautiful and comprehensive than immediate experience.21
This explains why the process of disparity of the human image in *Waiting for Godot* cannot easily lead to any considerable increase in consciousness. Two tramps are still prevented from any creative confrontation with each other, and with their inner voices by the prevailing power of a psyche—a wholesome comprehensive image that has been created and handed down from time immemorial, represented by "Godot", for whom they wait. After the messenger's arrival, Vladimir's situation becomes hopelessly grim, his flash of consciousness dies between his question "What have I said? (II, p. 91) and his relapse into the reliance of the coming of Godot.

The process of confrontation of the opposites is registered by the power of the traditional religious imagery, and as such creates an atmosphere of depression and painful frustration throughout the play. The audience is kept hoping for a change which never actually occurs. The
curtain comes down dividing the two Acts of *Waiting for Godot*. The tramps are supposed to be asleep and the contact between the play and the audience is temporarily suspended. Here takes place an apparently insignificant and almost imperceptible subtle change. We find that the originally bare tree has produced leaves overnight. Vladimir remembers to have noticed this, when he talked about happiness. The tree works as a powerful symbol in Beckett. Beckett has observed:

*Man is ... a tree whose stem and leafage are an expression of a inward sap.*

C.G. Jung also refers to an almost similar analogy:

*into every created thing God has breathed a certain power of germination, i.e., the greenness.*

The tramps wait for the rescuer, whom they see as a father-like figure, whereas the only indication of hope that occurs in the play
is that "greenness" which can be called the power of the mother-goddess. E. Neumann equates the mother-goddess with the unconscious and says:

Western culture and religion, society and morals are mainly formed by this (Jewish-Christian-father God) image and the psychic structure of the individual is partly made ill by it ... Today, as always, the battle of Western consciousness is fought in the spirit of the old Testament war that Jahveh waged against the mother-Goddess. 26

The symbolism may be interpreted as the state of incomplete, merely hoped for and expected.

Transformation appears to be not only torture but also a positive, though hidden, joy. It depicts the state of a human being who in confrontation with himself, has not only found deadly boredom and gloom but also an opposite relationship which is experienced as joy, known as a hidden happiness.

To the serious audience the entire play is a confrontation with an "opposite" and an experience of a relationship with a hidden
happiness, as also with a suffering of illness. *Waiting for Godot* is the most perfect blending, on Beckett's part, of comic and pathetic elements. *Waiting for Godot* may be said to be Beckett's most perfect absurd play with a tragi-comic overtone. Its perfection lies in a comprehensive and exact rendering of the spirit of the times. The play illustrates Beckett's sense of a profound humour hinted in *Endgame*.

Beckett's tramps actually indicate the nature of the absurd which is comic initially. Then it assumes by and by awful significance upon which we can not but notice a similar incongruity in all diversified aspects of our own lives, and in effect are quite convinced of the frustration. The audience is able to realize the tragic importance of this incongruity and wade through the gradual apprehension of the subject-matter.
Waiting for *Godot* with its fantastic characters and events, exaggerates and intensifies the facts of life to the extent where laughter stops. It is majorly done by means of a controlled expression through a specially treated language pattern. We laugh at the tramps who wait fruitlessly for their only saviour, entertaining themselves with senseless prattle, gesture and movements. Estragon turns ridiculous when he lets fall his trousers (II, p. 94); but the comedy of the incident cannot make us forget its cause — that Estragon takes out the trouser-cord so that he can hang himself with the same. We laugh at Pozzo and Lucky for their exaggerated presentation of the master-servant relationship. Lucky not only carries Pozzo’s things and acts upon his orders, but he also thinks on Pozzo’s behalf. He has taught him “beautiful things” (I, p. 33) about “beauty, grace, truth of the first water” (I, p. 33). However, he can never be quite oblivious of the fact that what is mimicked here, including the abject
intellectual slavery, exists in all forms in society.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the symbols are not fully developed, they are more or less spasmodic expressions of pain, having blended pathos and laughter. We find Beckettian symbols as mingled, but thereby very effective images have been created for presenting the aspects of the Absurd. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) the early 19th century, Danish religious thinker, known as the father of Existentialist philosophy, recognised that a writer engaged in this kind of enterprise of presenting the aspects of the absurd, must necessarily be a comic as well as a tragic writer. Kierkegaard's views are that:

the subjective, existing thinker is as much positive as he is negative ... he has as much of the comic as he has of the pathetic.

The point has been further illustrated:

pathos, not reinforced by the comic is illusion,
the comic that is not reinforced by pathos is immaturity .... Existence itself, the act of existing, is a striving as pathetic as it is comic; pathetic, because the striving is infinite ... comic, because such striving is self-contradictory. Seen pathetically, a second has infinite value; seen comically, ten thousand years are a mere flash of foolery like yesterday; and yet time, in which the existing individual finds himself is made up of such parts.25

In Godot, there is a conglomeration of symbolism and theatricalism, which illustrates the freedom of Twentieth-century stage from the shackles of conventions. It has been possible to have achieved this conglomeration through dialogic manoeuvre of the play. Besides the crudely physical humour of their movements — Estragon's loss of his trousers, or the confused exchange of three hats between the tramps (I, pp. 71-72), and their repetitive comic patter (very fast continuous amusing talk with out thought), overtly relates Beckett's comedy to the western music hall, melodrama or farce and to that practice in the circus.
The empty stage itself is a modern, Beckettian device to magnify theatricality by means of sly is 'suggestiveness' which creates for itself a sub-textual latent meaning. However, Beckett does not use the empty stage as elaborately as Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) does. In his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921; in English 1929), Pirandello wants to exploit the painful tension between the so-called "illusion" and assumed "reality". In *Waiting for Godot*, on the contrary, the major function is "staging the stage itself, as the setting of the action"\(^2\), with an eye to under-lining its emptiness — "a space to be filled with words and images (a tree, the moon rising at the end of Act I)"\(^2\). Nothing like this has ever been attempted in drama hitherto before Beckett. Modern theatre has increasingly used the stage-design as an 'empty space', for reconstructing space. Moreover additional attention to the stage has a further benefit of distancing the action from the audience. Imagination re-builds everything out
of 'airy nothings'. Jokes and jestful allusions keep the physical 'obviousness' of the stage continuously before the audience. This starts from the quietly ironic, feigned disrespect to the spectators:

(Estragon move to the centre, halts with his back to auditorium).
Estragon: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.)
Let's go. (I, p. 13).

In the middle of the Pozzo–Lucky episode in Act I, just at the point where Pozzo is speaking in his most histrionic manner, Vladimir and Estragon, as stage audience, assume that they are aware of the kind of spectacle they have been exposed to and trapped in:

Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
Estragon: Unforgettable.
Vladimir: And it's not over.
Estragon: Apparently not.
Vladimir: It's only the beginning.
Estragon: It's awful.
Vladimir: It's worse than being at the theatre.
Estragon: The circus.
Vladimir: The music hall. (I, p. 34).
The audience has no difficulty to identify these actors with the traditional clowns. The irony of this internal reference to what is going on here in the theatre gives the audience the chance to reflect on their own "charming evening" (p. 34) as they witness the play and the attendant risks of 'it' (the show) not yet being over. The digressions multiply. The reference to pantomime, music-hall, and circus sharpens awareness of circus clowns' antics of Vladimir and Estragon and the continuous patter in their dialogue distinctly reverberate in the auditorium to create a bewildering sense of in-depth comprehension.

The inward pointing theatre metaphors are intensified in Act II where the enclosed but 'spacious' stage of the theatre is used as an analogy for a place without exit corresponding, as it were, to hell. A sound heard off-stage, at a certain point, is taken as announcement for
the coming of Godot: "It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot!". Vladimir calls out to Estragon and drags him towards the wings of the stage, on the right, but Estragon "pulls himself free" (II, p. 73) to get lost through the exit. Vladimir runs to meet him on the extreme left, but Estragon re-enters from the right-wing. That he cries out "I'm in hell" (II, p. 74) in a context that makes it clear that all the exits have been blocked:

We're surrounded! (Estragon makes a rush towards back) Imbecile! There's no way out there. (He takes Estragon by the arms and drags him towards front! Off you go. Quick! (He pushes Estragon towards auditorium. Estragon recoils in horror.) You won't? (He contemplates auditorium). Well, I can understand that. Wait till I see. (He reflects.) Your only hope left is to disappear (II, p. 74).

An analogy can be drawn between the panic-stricken persons, who do not know which way to turn, in an all-enveloping 'hell', and the actors suffering from the stage-fright, wanting confusedly to use the back exit as well the front too. Such an episode as this, may be considered
as one of the many well-blended tragi-comic
effects achieved by Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*.
Comic jokes turn rather icy and do not lessen the
horror. The audience (for Vladimir and Estragon)
is supposed to be absent. Yet, presumably, it is
the thought of facing the auditorium that adds to
Estragon's horror.

Such overt pointers to the theatre are
reinforced by the most visible kind of physical
stage routines:

the boot games, the long hat passing number and
cursing etc. Hence the overt pointers create a
theatrical language of their own. These are "the
acts that owe most to the popular theatre ..." though Beckett was ... also influenced by the
comedians of the silent film". 27

A strong theatrical element is also
provided by the speech and movement of Pozzo, who
delivers a lecture and orders Lucky to entertain
the waiting tramps. Pozzo says: "these honest
fellows who are having such a dull time". (1, p.38) —
and in these words of Pozzo we find an oblique reference to the spectators also. Pozzo and Lucky are actors, for whom Vladimir and Estragon are the audience on the stage, and the latter two are required to be no less grossly theatrical.

Within the non-sequential play-structure of Waiting for Godot, an inward moving dialogue makes the audience attentive to the moment-by-moment ripple-effect of words, and even silence in the performance. In short, in Waiting for Godot a new type of poetic drama in prose has been brought forward. This is an achievement that surpasses, in several respects, the dramatic work of some major modern Twentieth century poets like Yeats and Eliot including the authors of the Symbolist and Expressionist plays. As the audience is accustomed to encounter new situations in the course of a play, it gets deeply surprized by the fact that the scenes repeat themselves. We are filled with the horror which we feel in front of those people
of the dramatic personae, who suffer from amnesia. It is significant that most of the characters of the play are unaware of this repetition. Even when reminded of it, they remain incapable of recognising that their experiences or conversations are merely recapitulations of yesterday's events or talk. Yet Beckett's presenting the characters, through their verbal exchanges as victims of amnesia, is absolutely legitimate. It is because if there is no sense of time, there can as well be no memory.

In *Waiting for Godot* we find a paradoxi-cally double sense of time, which expands and contracts at the same time — expanding towards absolute endlessness, and contracting into absolute simultaneity. In *Waiting for Godot* this double movement converge on a single point. When time finally stops, dimensionality becomes completely abolished. There remains a single instant of absolute simultaneity — which is an absolute
permanent, an endless instant occurring outside of time. This may be called the instant of eternity (Robert Browning made an obscure reference to this in his famous love-lyric The Last Ride Together (1845) ) which has always been traditionally defined in terms of a combination of endlessness and simultaneity. Defining this instant of eternity Ross Chambers writes:

The instant when one enters into possession of one's self, so that non-self and self at last coincide, an instant, then, that in a double sense would be both an end and a beginning, for it at once marks the end of our life-time's waiting and exile and the beginning of our "real" life out-side of time and is itself that new life, when end and beginning eternally coincide". 28

The double movement of endless approach to the single instant of eternity gives Waiting for Godot its essential structure. In the play, besides two time scales — one of expansion and the other of contraction, superimposed on each other, we find a third scale also. This is the time consumed in the theatre-hall during the
course of the play's action. The fourth time-scale is struck in the form of the growth-rate of the tree. Vladimir and Estragon, are of course in the familiar time-world of endless waiting:

Estragon: Simply wait.
Vladimir: We are used to it. (I, p. 38).

With them, the audience lives through two long evenings waiting for a release either temporary till nightfall or permanent the advent of Godot — only the first one comes as night sets in. At another point Vladimir announce, to Pozzo's alarm, that time has stopped. But once again it has not stopped; it is expanding towards infinity. The sense of endlessness is conveyed in the play by Beckett's skilled verbal expressiveness through minimalistic dialogues. For Estragon, words like yesterday, or sunday, or monday and the names of months and seasons are virtually meaningless. For him all time is the same. The reason why the tramps are bewildered is that they come up against signs of such a time-scale which is not their own.
In the names of the characters in *Waiting for Godot* such as Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, Lucky, it is interesting to note that Estragon is French; Vladimir, a Russian; Lucky, an English and Pozzo is an Italian. Apart from the ironic name of Lucky, which is befitting for an unfortunate thinker as he is, in naming Lucky, there must have been some design in assigning names to the characters drawn from different nationalities. Obviously it has nothing to do with the characteristics of these nations. If the names have not been used at random, since Beckett is artistically serious enough to weigh each of his word, such international naming design carries a suggestion that the audience is expected to think of this play not as an isolated piece of inaction, but as representing a cosmic state, a world-condition in which all humanity is involved. It is obvious that Beckett feels the cosmic anguish and writes in a pity that does not hesitate to use:
irony and wry humour to rub the nose of the reader into the mud in which he makes his creatures crawl.29

Lucky, the decrepit servant of Pozzo, seems to be the most perplexing character to the audience as well as the readers at their first encounter with the play. Lucky served Pozzo by dancing and also getting to 'think' under Pozzo's command. However, his role as a dehumanised thinker becomes immediately clear when we see his servility to Pozzo. The impact of Lucky's great broken tirade (I, pp. 42-45) becomes terrifying owing to a certain degree of surface incomprehensibility of Lucky's speech. When these babbling words are rightly spoken by a skilful performer on the stage, the speech creates a terror of its own. In spite of the chastic verbal expressions. "The demented logic of the tirade"30 may be discovered. Lucky's thought-world has been shattered by meditating on various themes. The diminishing presence of a
personal God who no longer feels, moves or speaks: "divine apathia, divine athembia, divine aphasia" (I, p. 43). The condition and sufferings of abandoned man has been "seen to waste and pine, waste and pine" (I, p. 43). Inspite of all man's so-called improvements, "inspite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding canoeing camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicilline," (I, p. 43) there is continued shrinking: "the skull to shrink and waste" (I, p. 44). Beckett has designed this speech very carefully and efficiently. The speech attains a significance of its own in the context of the Beckettian theatre, underlining the universal degeneration, the formidable loss of the human sense of the divine, and above all, a total breakdown of language, registering collapse of effective communication. This fast "deteriorating
control over language is an illness ("aphasia") that corresponds to a more general loss of meaning." Accordingly, we find that Lucky's syntactic speech pattern tends to get run-down, releasing repeated little phrases and isolated lyrical words:

Fading, fading, fading ... on, on ... alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull (I, p. 44).

The speech gradually degenerates into gibberish, loud noise and repetition. Lucky, the broken speaker is forcibly silenced, when his hat is snatched away by Vladimir. Lucky's "tirade" may as well be seen as the ultimate exposure of the predicament of man's acute transitoriness. It has been aptly critically commented that:

the precariousness of the human voice, of articulate speech, and thought, embodied in the crippled figure who runs down like an over used automation.32

Anselm Atkins points out that:
Lucky's speech is as carefully constructed as the play itself, and its meaning reinforced the themes of the play.33

In Lucky's speech the language of abstract ideas, of rational theology and the consolations of traditional philosophy have all been flatly grounded and emptied. Alain Robbe-Grillet observes in his critical essay "Samuel Beckett, or Presence in Theatre" that the:

importance of such reflexions cannot be overstressed. More than seven thousand years of analysis and metaphysics, instead of making us modest, have tended instead to make us forget the feebleness of our resources when it comes to what is essential. It is as if the real importance of any question were to be measured by our inability to apply our minds to it squarely, except to scale it down.34

Pozzo and Lucky may be classified among the few supreme metaphor-characters in the world drama. Though each of them is unique in his own way, yet they are inseparable from each other and, also complementary to each other. Their master-slave relationship is powerfully enacted on every
level in their physical appearance also Pozzo is massive, smooth and rigid, while Lucky is emaciated and anaemic. In their voice and speech, and also in many socio-psychological images suggested by their terrible role the disparity is noticed. The evident image presented by them refers perhaps to some sado-masochistic bondage. Although they are contrasted sharply, Pozzo and Lucky have one thing in common. Both of them are driven by a desperate attempt to evade panic of loneliness or isolation. Pozzo hurls monosyllabic orders at Lucky, without ever looking in the latter's direction. As far as Pozzo is concerned there exists no other will than his own. He wants to be equated with the entire universe around him. He destroys time-sequence by not listening. He ignores urgency by taking time to fidget with his "pipe" or his "mouthspray" (pp. 28-30).

In Act-I of the play we find from the dialogue that Pozzo is delightfully indulging in
an almost impressive display of pessimistic philosophy. But his pessimism becomes somewhat poetic in the end of Act II in the sense that Pozzo slips in his dialogue into universalizing the inexorable human predicament. Telescoping of the ordinary and the extraordinary elements in the characters contributes to the overall impact of Waiting for Godot especially achieved through its intricate dialogic pattern. Pozzo owns the mind of his servile servant Lucky and totally dehumanises him, controlling him with rope and whip. He may as well be interpreted as a gruesome product of the modern civilization. Standing for a small pack of subjective feelings and responses, Pozzo sometimes indulges in self-pity, but soon he comes up to repress his fear with narcissistic vainglory:

Do I look like a man who can be made to suffer? (I, p. 34).

On a close examination we may catch a glimpse of a submerged nostalgia for lost values,
concealed under the mask of an apparent ruggedness.

Pozzo says about Lucky:

But for him all my thoughts, all my feelings, would have been of common things. (Pause. With extraordinary vehemence) professional worries! (calmer) Beauty, grace, truth of the first water, I knew they were all beyond me ... (I, p. 33).

On the other hand, we see in Lucky the destroyed contact with psyche. Lucky, abject and completely submissive, passes for an exaggerated metaphor of the subjection of the rest of society to the man in power. What Beckett has hinted at is the slavery of the intellectual, who, in a confused state, is always engaged at serving the Powers-that-be with his stock of undigested knowledge. It is Lucky who has inculcated conformism to Pozzo:

Beauty, grace, truth of the first water. I knew they were all beyond me (I, p. 33).

So the present thought-master Pozzo has grown on Lucky, the one-time thinker. It is as if all Lucky's
thoughts have been washed away and now all that is left are merely cliches for Pozzo derived from Lucky’s disintegrated mind — a broken language, broken syntax of thought.

Lucky also embodies the image of every-man’s lost-intellectual potentiality. His ruined body and mind also refer to the victims of torture in a world of political asylums and concentration camps racial massacres and terrorist assassinations. This “primary level of terror, framed by Pozzo’s verbal pomp and circumstance, remains ... His posture is condescending, his talk inflated, his ideas are made up of social cliches and sentimental wind-baggery”. Nevertheless, Lucky deserves his name, because, after all he has a master, who organizes, Lucky’s life for him, even though cruelly. In Waiting for Godot, we are informed that by dancing and thinking Lucky could amuse and inspire Pozzo previously. But his state of slavery has gradually put an end to all that. Spark of
spontaneity burns no more within him. Of his
original dancing nothing is left, and his thinking
has diminished into the endless repetition of the
utterances of the schizophrenics.

It becomes more and more evident in the
course of Waiting for Godot that Lucky takes it
for granted that only within the pattern of
sadomasochistic relationship between himself and
Pozzo there can be any safety for him. In Act I,
Pozzo reveals this in words:

I can't bear it ... any longer (groaning,
clutching his head) the way he goes on ... you've no idea — it's terrible! ... he must
go ... (he brandishes his arms) ... I'm going
mad ... (he collapses, his head in his hands)
... I can't bear it ... any longer ... (sobbing)
He used to be so kind ... so helpful ... and
entertaining ... my good angel ... and now ... he's killing me! (I, p. 34).

For this mutual inter-dependence Lucky has
sacrificed everything, even his soul and his
creativeness. He has accepted this misery and
slavery as a matter which does not concern anybody
but Pozzo and himself. In Act I, commenting on Lucky's voluntary slavery Pozzo says:

But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his arse, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them (Lucky weeps).

Estragon: He's crying.

Pozzo: Old dogs have more dignity.

(z. p. 32).

When Estragon tries to wipe Lucky's tears with Pozzo's handkerchief, Lucky suddenly kicks him in the shinbone. Pozzo and Lucky represent not only the materialistic social and sensual strata of existence, but also they illustrate the rapid process of decay and degradation to which human society has been cruelly and ruthlessly subjected to, irrespective of all its clamorous protestations. Pozzo and Lucky appear to more fast towards this deterioration, as contrasted with the waiting tramps, who remain unchanged:

Vladimir: How they've changed!

Estragon: Who?
Vladimir: Those two.
Estragon: That's the idea.
Vladimir: They haven't changed.
Estragon: What?
Vladimir: Changed.
Estragon: Very likely. They all change. Only we can't.
Vladimir: Likely! It's certain (I, p. 48).

This contrast has been very subtly put up on the stage by the playwright by means of a unique verbal deployment.

In Act II, the controlled intellectual Lucky has become dumb, and the 'controller' Pozzo, blind. Esslin explains Pozzo and Lucky as respectively the body and the mind. We see in Act II that the blind Pozzo (an unfit body) is fastened to the dumb Lucky (an unthinking mind). Thus, what Beckett presents is a perfect picture of disintegration through a dramatically effective and significant verbal strategy underlining the absurd situation spelt out by existentialist philosophy. If we assume that Pozzo-Lucky pair may be
comparable to a collective pseudoeego, we may expect the tramps Vladimir and Estragon, to reveal features of the lost value hidden in those who have "something above the average, an overplus for which there is no adequate outlet". For those persons having something above the average, there is more wisdom in their frenzy than in the kind of sanity in which the majority feels safe. The tramps are the representatives of this rejected class, bound to come to the rescue of a no-longer valid normality. This is what is shown by the tramps, Estragon and Vladimir in their role enacted in Beckett's masterpiece. In Act II the blind Pozzo falls down and cannot get up. He calls out for help. The two tramps keep making futile attempts to assist him, while they also keep forgetting if it concerns them at all. Vladimir suddenly realizes the human significance of the situation and speaks out:

To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not (II, p. 79).
Godot for whom Estragon and Vladimir wait, does not appear at all. They speak of their vague fantasies of being taken to Godot’s farm where they could be able to sleep warm and dry on straw with a full stomach. But Godot is still a mirage. At the close of each day a boy messenger arrives with the message that Godot will turn up the next day.

What we come to know about Godot is that in Act I we are informed that Godot does not beat the boy messenger, who is a goat-herd. However, he beats the boy-messenger’s brother, a shepherd. Vladimir and Estragon feel uneasy about Godot when they are supposed to meet him for they will have to approach him “on their hands and knees”. If they discard their waiting for him, he would punish them. At the end of Act II we know that Godot does nothing and his beard is probably white. From all this description it may be gathered that Godot has several traits much in common with the
conventional image of God as we know it from the Old and the New Testaments. Godot’s white beard reminds us of one of the common old-father image of God. That he shows:

irrational preference for one brother recalls Jehovah’s treatment of Cain and Abel; so does his power to punish those who would dare to drop him.38

Thus Godot stands for the traditional concept of an all-powerful God. This is why the tramps use conventional theological terms when speaking of their appointment:

Estragon: What exactly did we ask him to do for us?
Vladimir: Oh ... nothing very definite.
Estragon: A kind of prayer.
Vladimir: Precisely.
Estragon: A vague supplication.
Vladimir: Exactly (i, p. 18).

Again in Act II they say:

Vladimir: ... We have kept our appointment ... we are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?
Estragon: Billions (II, p. 80).
The notion that Godot is God may be corroborated by pointing out that:

the discrimination between goatherd and shepherd is reminiscent of the Son of God as the ultimate judge; as a savior for whom men wait and wait, he might well be meant as a cynical comment on the second coming of Christ; while his doing nothing might be an equally cynical reflection concerning man's forlorn state. This feature, together with Beckett's statement about something being believed to 'in store for us, not in store in us' seems to show clearly that Beckett points to the sterility of a consciousness that expects and waits for the old activity of God or Gods.39

Beckett's absurd tends to emphasize this sterility or bluntness of human consciousness in the existential world around him.

The seed of Godot is Luke's account of the crucifixion, as summarized by St. Augustine: 'Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned! The two thieves are Didi and Gogo; the two thieves are you and me. And the play is shaped to reflect that fearful symmetry.40 In Act I Vladimir expresses his desire to be saved "Suppose we repented" (I, p. 11).
In *Waiting for Godot*, we hear that once Vladimir and Estragon had seen Godot. Here, what Beckett seems to imply may be that in today's religion the spiritual and the material needs remain mixed up. Godot is vague, an empty promise corresponding to a dwindling piety. The wait for Godot has developed into a habit which, in Beckett's words, is a "guarantee of dull inviolability . . .".41 In other words, this may be said to be an adaptation to the meaninglessness of life. Beckett further illustrates:

that separate consecutive adaptation ... represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, mysterious and futile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being.42

Though in *Waiting for Godot*, there are some hints at the possibility of such moments of transition, yet Beckett does not allow the transformation to take place. Vladimir's private
meditation goes on and cuts across Estragon's questions. Yet these two remain in a satisfactory communicative frame, supporting each other's need to exchange words against the void—whether or not the conversation meets the requirements of what we consider 'good talk', or 'co-operative conversation' in the sense of an effective communication. The endless verbal inventiveness is flexible enough to sustain the speakers' endless interest in each other and the audience's interest in their precarious destiny.

With an eye to the overall structure and theatricality of the play, we find that Beckett is, above all, a master of words. The language of *Waiting for Godot* makes move allusions to the theatre than any other Beckettian play. The characters of the play often interact through speech, as their dialogue is counterpointed by movement, gesture, visuals and auditive effects.
It remains true that Beckett's intricate pattern of verbal expressiveness springs from an extreme view of language that envisages a disjoining of words from objects. It registers a denial that language can either represent or express the world as it is. There is a recurrent, almost hypnotic desire noticed in *Waiting for Godot* for words to cease—which may be called a quest for silence. *Waiting for Godot* is a fully embodied play despite Beckett's known views on the failure of language and on the total isolation of the speaker secreting words. The total impact of *Waiting for Godot* is rich, mere concrete and multi-vocal than what is normally expected from Beckett's virtual negation of language.

Over four decades *Waiting for Godot* has not loosened its grip over the audience—attention with a strong impact which is likely to endure in the days to come. Beckett's verbal expressiveness
in the dramatic art embodies exact images of action along with a far-reaching vision of human existence.
Waiting for Godot: The incommunicable essence.

Notes and References:


2. Beckett's "Nothing" is the most positive thing in the world. Beckett offers his positive vision of the Real, first in his novel Murphy: "Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare post-natal treat .... not the numb peace of their own suspension, but the positive peace that comes when the somethings give way, or perhaps simply add up, to the Nothing, ... naught is more real .... Murphy continue to suck in ... the accidentless One-and-Only, conveniently called Nothing". Murphy (London: John Calder, 1963), p. 168. This is the Supreme
Reality, beyond active perception is the "accidentless one-and-Only" which is called "Nothing", because it cannot be called anything else.

Hemingway best reveals his sense of the meaninglessness of the world, of nothingness by the word "nada" which, however, points to the irremediable despair haunting man's life — beyond any material possession, or money or any other comforts of the world. We find the word "nada" in Hemingway's story "A Clean, well-lighted place" in The Fifth Column and The First Forty-Nine Stories (New York: Grove Press, 1938, p. 477).

Almost the same use of "nada" or nothingness is noticed in Sartre's L'être et le néant, 1943 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 18th edn) Ch II. English trans., H.E. Barnes.
Being and Nothingness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957). Both Sartre and Hemingway refer to an awareness of the nothingness haunting existence in appearance or "facade", whereas Beckett moves on to a realization of the entity beyond the world of appearances, which is called Nothing, because it is both incomprehensible as well as indescribable. Beckett's "Nothing" tends to recall the mystics who describe their perceptions — of the Ultimate in negative terms.


5. Ibid., p. 147.


10. Rules of Existentialism as propounded by Jean-Paul Sartre, has been explained by Frederick Lumley in New Trends in 20th Century Drama, op. cit., p. 144.

11. Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., p. 120.


16. Ibid., p. 61.


24. "In Honour of the Centenary of Freud's Birth", *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 
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27. Ibid., p. 43.


31. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
32. Ibid., p. 42.


38. Eva Metman, Samuel Beckett: A Collection
of *Critical Essays*, p. 125.

39. Ibid., p. 125.


42. Ibid., p. 8.

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