CHAPTER V

Conclusion
CONCLUSION

Beckett's drama, as we have tried to establish in the foregoing chapters, has changed the very idea of the dramaturgy. Starting with Waiting for Godot, Beckett's plays have scored high with their performance aided by a unique utilization of dialogue. Language has made Beckett's work stand on a very high dramatic pedestal. It has been possible for the playwright to adopt a circular structure of action within a non-sequential thematic limit. A sense of timelessness is created by means of an inward-moving dialogic expressiveness which has made the audience interested in the immediate ripple-effect of words and sounds, including the well-intended application of 'pauses' and 'silences', inside the auditorium. What Beckett has done in his plays, as evident in Waiting for Godot is that he has been able to create an entirely new type of poetic drama in prose — an achievement that excels the dramatic
exercises of some of the major twentieth century poets including W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. Beckett's major contribution to modern drama lies in the invention of a definite linguistic form of verbal expressiveness.

Beckett's early fiction is verbally lavish and cumbersome and even abstruse with various oddities often drawn from technical vocabularies. Gradually this obscurity of language gets diminished. Beckett starts using plainer words, as is evident in his novels Malone Dies (1952) and The Unnamable (1953); the process of simplifying language continues in the plays with experiments in muteness denoted by pauses and silences. That Beckett initially preferred the use of technical vocabulary points to the idea that the human beings and their environment may be known with the help of the physically diagnosable or identifiable or even quantifiable means. Beckett's characters turn the metaphysical anguish by which they are surrounded,
into some accessible riddles. After all, Beckett's rout in the play is partially visual, but mainly verbal. Vladimir and Estragon incite each other to follow a conversational line, often with rhetorically powerful consequences. Pozzo excercises sometimes lyrical and sometimes prosaic tones while Hamm continues with normal narrative tone. Here, Beckett's dialogue incorporates various stage-forms such as aside, soliloquy, modes of exit, pauses, intonation, gesture and movement. In view of this D.F.K. McConnell rightly observed in his A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), that

"A fiction where language is allowed to deal only with a set of circumstances, imposed by its user, is more scrutable than life. When language threatens to escape the limitations, either there is silence or a new routine takes over" (p. 190).

In Beckett's dramatic expressions as seen in Waiting for Godot agreement is rare, either on memories supposedly held in common, or on the meaning of the phrases recapitulating the past. Repetition used by
Beckett while his characters exchange words, as well as the changing contexts, reduce the words to an ironic precision. Both in *Waiting for Godot* and in *Endgame* we find such verbal design. Vladimir's "fullness of time" is synonymous with his other expression "for the time being". Lucky's sermon offers "time without extension" durations of time period does not matter much, or even at all — whether it is a day or fifty long years. Fonzo, for example, in order to determine "that was nearly sixty years ago", consults his watch. Again when Vladimir tries to recall "this evening", Estragon retorts "I'm not a historian". Beckett therefore tries to discover that to be in time and place, are equally indeterminate.

However some critics have also tried to probe some word-clues which could perhaps set-up a time-frame very subtly envisaged by Beckett. We find in *Waiting for Godot* such expressions as "in the nineties", "fifty years perhaps", or "half a
century". With the help of these piecemeal references the action of the play may be placed around 1940s. It may be that Vladimir and Estragon are living around the time of the under-ground French-Resistance movement, against German occupation, in which Samuel Beckett served.

Waiting for Godot vibrates in its own secretive way, with the strain, fear, restlessness, distress and despondency of the time. Again there are more clues to be found in the play if we attempt the careful scrutinizing. This waiting at a relatively safe enclosure somehow and somewhere may be in apprehension for the agent who does not appear. Interrogation such as "Let's ask each other questions", or beatings, alluded to, for extracting that information which is not with the victim. "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).

Some of the verbal exchanges also refer to some
concealed loyalty such as—

Estragon: He wants to know if we are friends.
Vladimir: No, he means "friends of his".

Such references and documentary facts are embedded beneath the pangs of Vladimir and Estragon. The place names such as Macon and Cackon are names which Vladimir calls to mind but are dismissed by Estragon. Beckett's language thus tries to establish that places, like times, even if identifiable are hardly worth differentiating.

There is an interesting angle in the verbal exchanges adopted by Beckett in his plays. Although there is an absence of a clear topography in the dramatic dialogue of a Beckett play, yet there is a faint awareness of a vanished, or banished knowledge of some location or region.

"Vladimir: I once knew a family called Gozzo.
Estragon: We're not from these parts Sir".
This verbal exchange may also refer to some zones of human mind, in the sense that the landscape of their origin is blurred, abstracted into their essential nature. Much in the same way again Beckett's war-time experience is an echo of some faintly heard echoes, found in Waiting for Godot. An important element of Beckett's dialogic expressiveness is that it blends perfectly with the nature of the absurd in his plays. He refuses conclusions, avoid interpretations and refers to the perilous zones in the life of an individual under the Existential agony — his sense of the dangerous, the mysterious, the painful the precarious and the meaningless. Beckett's dramatic dialogue thus blend the boredom of living with the suffering of being. Beckett tries to locate his characters in their inner selves, within the Existential frame. The time in which Beckett's characters exist is less determinate or determinable.
Beckett's excellence lies in his examining the nature of the absurdity of life in relation to the expressive interactions of the characters existing in a meditative time-zone of agonised crisis. Through his dialogic course of dramatic action the playwright has tried to characterise human mini devoid of moral resources, imprisoned in a narrow phenomenal perception. His characters therefore try to spell themselves out by various odds and ends and by words which in their own characteristic way stand for, and give vent to a reality too fearful to inhabit. It may be concluded that Beckett's delineation of existential suffering ultimately becomes a reference to human endurance, imagined in a theatrical form. That Beckett's language is often humorous points to the dramatic necessity which requires the thematic painfulness to be diminished on the stage. Godot, as Beckett strives to present, is a grimly humorous hypothesis. As a playwright he is very conscious to keep "the
reality" of his plays — its words exchanged between the characters and in action, at a carefully maintained distance from the realistic world outside the plays. Therefore a Beckett play becomes an absurdist microcosm by itself.

As we have tried to point out in the preceding chapters, Beckett's theatre language, with all its verbal expressiveness, emphasizes on the manner of looking at things than on themes or subjects by themselves. For while evaluating Beckett's theatre the important point to remember is that for Beckett the manner stands very close to being the matter. Whatever may appear to be an isolated theme, or a meaning, is almost inextricably the part and parcel of the way by which the playwright has perceived and also presented on the stage. Beckett's language continually draws a design of absolute uncertainty. A despair looms large over Beckett's drama. Vladimir and Estragon utter "Let's go" but
they do not move, nor do they part with each other. A static meaningless situation gets created through various odds and ends, and this ultimately gives way to in an absurd theatrical reality.

For Beckett the primary end of a language is not to discover some abstract set of rules which remain behind each and every utterance in a given language, on the contrary Beckett tries to see and examine closely what is going on in human mind during the course of each utterance.

Beckett's oeuvre desires a life of its own, going beyond the author's conscious intentions, and getting expanded by having gained layers of new meaning through the experience it evokes in the minds and emotions of the audience. It is the existential experience in Beckett's literary work, which evokes a direct, existential human response and ensures a continued impact on succeeding generations.
The experience expressed in Beckett's plays through its apparent intricacy of verbal expressiveness, is of far more profound and fundamental nature than mere autobiography. They manifest his experience of temporality and evanescence. The language of Beckettian plays expose his sense of the tragic difficulty of being aware of one's own self in the merciless process of renovation and destruction that occurs with change in time. In his dramatic works, there is a revelation of the difficulty of communication between human being; of the unending quest for reality in a world in which everything is uncertain and the borderline between dream and waking is ever shifting; of the tragic nature of all love relationships and the self-deception of friendship. Beckett's creative intuition explores the elements of experience and shows to what extent all human beings carry the seeds of such depression and disintegration within the deeper layers of their personality.
Through his unique dialogic art in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett makes the audience face a confrontation with concrete projection of the deepest fears and anxieties, which have been only vaguely experienced at a half-conscious level. This device of Beckett brings a cathartic effect to liberate the audience of their subconscious contents of minds. This is the moment of release from deadening habit, through facing up to the suffering of existence.

Beckett makes sense out of what appears as a senseless and fragmented action. He recognises the fact, that the modern world has lost its unifying principle. Beckett makes his spectators confront the madness of the human condition to enable them to see their situation with all its grimness and despair. The reality with which Beckett is concerned is a psychological reality attained through verbal expressiveness. It is expressed in images of outward projection
of the states of mind, fears, dreams, nightmares and conflicts within the personality of the author. This is why the dramatic tension produced by Waiting for Godot differs fundamentally from the suspense created in a theatre concerned mainly with the revelation of objective characters through the unfolding of a narrative plot.

Beckett's devaluation and disintegration of language as we find in Waiting for Godot and his other plays is nothing but a striving to communicate basic and as yet undissolved totality of perception, an intuition of being. For, the translation of the total intuition of being into logical and temporal sequence of conceptual thought, deprives it of its complexity and poetic truth. Beckett, in carrying a poetic endeavour into the concrete of imagery of the stage, has been able to go further than pure poetry in dispensing with logic, disursive
thought and language. By putting the language of a scene in contrast to the action, by reducing it to meaningless patter, or by abandoning discursive logic for the poetic logic of association or assonance, Beckett has opened up a new dimension at the level of verbal expressiveness of the stage.