Soyinka’s play *The swamp dwellers* bears the theme of conflict between the city and the village where the rural virtue and innocence normally suffer under the impact of the glare of sophisticated hypocrisy. Polar opposites are placed in juxtaposition with each other; drought and flood, scarcity and surfeit, corruption and innocence, arrogance and humility and above all, frustration and hope. The swamp of the setting is suggestive of dirt, or mire, in the literal sense as well as the figurative. The mire literally sucks the people in and it appears to revel in its own harvest feast of farm products and human lives. This is Soyinka’s one of the Leed’s plays written in 1957 where he worked within a tradition of poetic – naturalistic treatments of peasant societies confronted by new values and by disruptive social forces. This tradition is illustrated by the work of Anton Chekov, by Luigi Pirandello’s *The life that I gave you*, Gerhart Hauptmann’s *Before dawn* and most significantly for Soyinka’s play, by J. M. Synge’s *The shadow of the Glen.*

The idea is worked out with two symbolic characters, Igwezu and Awuchike, twin brothers, representing the swamp and the city respectively. The former is real and concrete; the latter does not appear at all. The Christ figure to be developed further to reappear in several manifestations in some of his later plays like
The strong breed is introduced for the first time in The swamp dwellers in the character of the blind beggar which is attributed to the theme of salvation. On the one hand Igwezu grew in a culture that had set a way of doing things. Yet on the other hand, has the courage to face the useless Kadiye and become a ‘slayer of serpents’. He was able to see through the tradition and realize that Kadiye had nothing to do with the nature of the swamp.

Igwezu: I know that the floods can come again.
That the swamp will continue to laugh at our endeavour I know that we can feed the serpent of the swamp and kiss the Kadiye’s feet – but the vapours will still rise and corrupt the tassels of the corn”. (CPI p.110)

Soyinka tells the story of Makuri and Alu and their twin sons Awuchike and Igwezu. Ten years before the play opens, Awuchike had set off across the swamps for the city to seek his fortune. Nothing has been heard of him since then. Some months before the opening dialogue, Igwezu had planted his fields, provided the Kadiye or priest of the serpent of the swamp, with a calf to sacrifice to the serpent and left with his young wife for the city. There he found Awuchike alive and wealthy, but ‘dead’ to his parents and to any sense of family responsibility. Igwezu has struggled and had earned enough money to fulfill his promise to send his father a swivel chair. But he had not prospered, his wife had left him for his rich brother and he had been forced to use the harvest he anticipated from his fields as security on a loan from
that same rich and unbrotherly brother. Very shortly before the 
lights come up on Makuri and Alu at the start of the play, Igwezu 
had returned home and had, almost immediately rushed out to 
inspect his crops. A desolate sight awaited him for the rains had 
been very heavy and the crops have been ruined by the floods. The 
Kadiye, who had promised protection in return for the sacrificed 
calf, had failed him and, indeed, the community.

Far from being embarrassed or ashamed, the Kadiye, 
hearing that Igwezu has returned and anticipating that he has made 
his fortune in the city, visits Makuri's house and asks to be shaved 
by Igwezu. Eventually he seats himself in the swivel chair, thereby 
inautiously, placing at the mercy of the disappointed young man. 
With a razor at the priest's throat and his hand quivering with rage 
and spiritual confusion, Igwezu pours out a stream of questions 
about the priest's promises and conduct.

Igwezu: Who must appear the serpent of the Swamp?
Kadiye: The Kadiye
I: Who takes the gifts of the peoples, in order that 
the beast may be gorged and made sleepy eyed with 
the feast of sacrifice?
K: The Kadiye.
I: On whom does the land depend for the 
benevolence of the reptile? Tell me that, priest.
Answer in one word.
K: Kadiye (CPI p108)
Soyinka succeeds through the incorporation of the African idiom, myth and ritual from which perspective he explores the absurdity of the human condition against the background of African belief systems, while Beckett employs the modernist avant-garde theatrical techniques and Christian concepts to project the absurdity of human existence. In his most obscure plays Soyinka delineates life in complex textural frames, with equivalent complicated themes but in his simple works he is plain and lucid, in the manner of Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* which paradoxically have profound prophetic visions. The substance of *The Swamp Dwellers* can be evaluated within these realms. Because the play is almost devoid of an abstruse texture, un-native to Soyinka's art, its bare surface realism suggests almost nothing to a connoisseur with a voracious appetite for surface complexity. Apart from its apparent themes of the decay of a rural society the play above all reflects man's ultimate search for a veritable source of salvation for man. Since human life presents constant problems and contradictions, symbolized for example, by the setting of *The Swamp Dwellers*, the playwright finds the individual and the society in continual need of salvation for itself. This can be achieved either by mass act or through the dedication of earthly messiahs like Demoke in *A Dance of the Forests*, Eman in *The Strong Breed*, and Igwezu in *The Swamp Dwellers*.

Although there are perceptible differences in terms of regions, cultures and techniques between *Waiting for Godot* and *The Swamp Dwellers*, Beckett and Soyinka re-enact the situation of
human predicament with artistic similitude. The similarity in terms of setting, characterization, and themes among all others are quite evident in the two plays. The arid setting of *Waiting for Godot* which as Harold Hobson observes in the opening paragraph of his review “has nothing at all to seduce the senses” because its “drab bare scene is dominated by a withered a tree” \(^2\). This is evocative of the rotting swamps and the dry North in *The Swamp Dwellers*, of which are symbolic representations of the inexplicable and hazardous universe in which man finds himself. Beckett's indiscernible Godot represents Christian themes as James Acheson admits in his book, *Samuel Beckett's Artistic Theory and Practice*, while Soyinka's unappeasable Serpent is the spiritual essence in the swamps, an aspect of animism in African traditional religion. Beckett's desolate tramps Vladimir and Estragon who depend entirely on the arrival of Godot for salvation without whom they contemplate suicide echo in Soyinka's disillusioned Igwezu whose efforts to appease the Serpent to procure a happier life rather frustrates him. The wealthy Pozzo parallels the capitalist Awuchike who takes advantage of man's wretchedness to exploit others. The uncompromising Lucky who is Pozzo's slave and the despised Beggar from the North are Sisyphean archetypes who readily submit themselves to their fates and who are determined to survive against all odds.

The central issue in both plays is on the question of salvation as stated above. Soyinka raises the problem as to whether or not the swamp dwellers should continue to depend on the
Serpent for salvation in spite of the interminable calamities that confront them. *The Swamp Dwellers* projects this theme at a more individual level. It treats the story of a youth whose dependence on supernal assistance comes to no avail. His naivety, even leads him into terrible casualties which prompt him to question in the face of adversity, the authenticity of the god he worships. A closer appreciation of the play suggests the pertinence of the following question: Should man continue to grope through an absurd existence with blind hope for divine salvation or should he seek other ways of saving himself? This appears to be the playwright's obsession in the play. The protagonist of the play, Igwezu, an ideal son of the Swamps who is loyal to tradition, has performed all the necessary rites required by the deity to ensure a good harvest and a happy life with his wife. The impotence of this god gradually creeps into his awareness from several inexplicable mishaps that confront him, both in the city and the Swamps. In his short stay in the city to try his hands at making money, his twin brother, Awuchike, seduces his wife, contrary to the spiritual values of the Swamp. Much frustrating, he fails in his commercial enterprise. His misery is recalled later on his return to the Swamps when he tells the Kadiye: "I'm afraid I have had my turn already. I lost everything, my savings, even my standing as a man. I went into debt". Igwezu's tragedy is more severe when he returns to the Swamps with the hope of recovering from his despair by harvesting his crops: "I came back with hope, with consolation in my heart. I came back with the assurance of one who has lived his
land and tilled it faithfully." He discovers with utter disappointment and disbelief that the floods had ruined his farm and "the beans and the corn had made an everlasting pottage with the mud." Makuri's consolatory plea: "It is the will of the god," is least appealing to a man against whom fortune has turned her back. His reliance on the omnipotence of the Serpent begins to abate on being puzzled why he should be so righteous yet so forsaken. His contempt is explicit when he requires the Priest of the Serpent - the Kadiye; to give meaning to what seems "dark and sour." He achieves this through a series of clarification questions:

Igwezu: Did I not offer my goats to the Priest? ... And made it clear - that the offering was from me? That I demanded the protection of the heavens on me and my house, on my father and on my mother, on my wife, land and chattels?

Kadiye: All prayers were repeated.

Igwezu: And ever since I began to till the soil did I not give his due? Did I not bring the first lentils to the shrine, and pour the first oil upon the altar?

Kadiye: Regularly.

Igwezu: And when the Kadiye blessed my marriage and tied the heaven-made knot, did he not promise long life, did he not promise happiness?....

Kadiye: \[Does not reply this time\] (CP I 109).
Igwezu's fate is the quintessence of man's misery in a world which offers no hopes of divine protection or signs of a promised land. His experience shows that dependence on divine assistance leads to more terrible adversity in life. On the other hand, Awuchike is the ungodly rewarded. Although he is physically absent in the play we gather from other characters that he denounces his parents, tradition and the Swamps with all its spiritual ramifications, commits a taboo and immerses himself in the rough city ways in which he thrives as a wealthy timber merchant. One gets obsessed at this point, why Igwezu should be forsaken and Awuchike rewarded.

We find this pattern of nihilism or the degenerating spiritual consciousness in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* which as James Acheson suggests, "raises the question whether the modern man should or should not believe in divine salvation," although Acheson goes further to conclude that "Godot's non-arrival, strongly hints that he should not". For Acheson, *Waiting for Godot* is an invective against Christian hope since the modern man, like Didi and Gogo wait endlessly for Godot who does not come. Although the tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, do not make any such effort as Igwezu does, they are victims of a scathing existence which they are unable to understand.

The characters in both plays, therefore, live a tragic and meaningless existence in which human experience is futile. In line with Declan Kiberd, Beryl Fletcher and John Fletcher maintain that the world of *Waiting for Godot* is "a world without divinity but a
kind of malignant fate, a world in which man waits, hopes for something to give meaning to his life”\textsuperscript{6}. This is true of Vladimir and Estragon and Lucky and Pozzo, to a commendable extent. Estragon and Vladimir are trapped in the complications of life, a situation that is hopelessly unfathomable. They are unable to understand the \textit{raison d'être} for their existence. Existence seems to be something imposed on them by some unknown force and there is absolutely no meaning to it. Their very source of hope Godot is indefinable and unpredictable imposing on them the grim reality of desolation, what Estragon describes in the play as “dreadful privation”\textsuperscript{7}.

Lucky's fate is even more pathetic than any other in \textit{Waiting for Godot}. The luggage he carries symbolises the burdens of the world carried by humanity. The rope tied to his neck and which Pozzo pulls at will is also symbolic of humanity's inability to extricate itself from the burdens of existence. Seen from Eugene Ngezem's viewpoint the burdens portray him as a victim of “arbitrary authority” which Pozzo incarnates.\textsuperscript{8} Pozzo as well, although seems comfortable at first, discovers himself blind one day. From the inevitable adversity that confronts him, he gradually comes to an understanding of the gruesome realities of existence in his remarks: “They gave birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.” (Beckett 89). The “grave” and “light” symbols represent death and life respectively. But the briefness in human life expressed in the symbolism reflects utter futility in human existence. Pozzo himself is symbolic of humanity
that thinks itself free from the hazards of life but who sooner or later becomes a victim of fatal existence he cannot explain. The characters in *The Swamp Dwellers* are confronted with similar ordeals as those in *Waiting for Godot*. The prime victim is Igwezu, an ideal son of the Swamps whose dependence on supernal assistance for a meaningful existence leads him to frustration. The impotence of his god gradually creeps into his awareness from several inexplicable mishaps that confront him both in the city and in the village of the Swamp. His venture in the city fails while his brother, Awuchike, who has severed all ties of family, religion and tradition, seduces his wife. His misery is recalled later on his return to the Swamps where he hopes to recover from his despair by harvesting his crops, but discovers with disappointment and anguish that the floods have ruined his farm. The idea of “loss” reflects Igwezu's inability to comprehend the complications of his existence, and therefore, questions and condemns the potency of the Serpent of the Swamps to whom he has offered enormous sacrifices. Doubts of divine competence to save humanity from the vagaries of life are revoked in his question:

"If I slew the fatted calf, Kadiye, do you think the land may breathe again? If I slew all the cattle in the land and sacrificed every measure of goodness, would it make any difference to our lives, Kadiye? Would it make any difference to our fates?" (CP I 109).

The Kadiye, thus trapped and humiliated, leaves the scene.
threatening blood. But Igwezu's mind is now open. He has emancipated himself from the manacles of deceit, realising in a consolatory stand. "I know that we can appease the Serpent of the Swamps and kiss the Kadiye's feet, but the vapours will still rise and corrupt the tassels of the corn" (CP I 108).

Igwezu's return to the city is manifest of the decision he has taken. The city symbolizes a place where a man who is aware that he is his own saviour struggles and succeeds as Awuchike does. Igwezu rejects the Swamps and all its spiritual values with the contention that, only the children and the old stay back in the village, in other words, only those who are ignorant or have not yet experienced the paradox of existence do not venture into the unknown. His departure from the Swamps reflects that of his bondsman, the blind beggar who faces similar gruesome adversities: "I headed away from my home and set my face towards the river." The dry North from where he comes has undergone lengthy periods of draught, and later, a devastation of a crop-flourish by locusts, seems to show Soyinka's characteristic manner of presenting the poignant edges of life on which man is staked.

The plight of the blind Beggar from the North is even more severe than that of Igwezu, even though the latter is the protagonist of the play. Like Lucky, the blind Beggar undergoes all sorts of excruciating humiliation from people who show no sympathy for the afflicted, from natural hazards in the desert North including the "fly sickness" which eventually renders him blind, the severe droughts and the destruction of a rare flourishing of crops by
locusts. As the Beggar narrates his ordeal to Makuri and his wife, Alu, at the initial stage of his blindness he believes that he can be rescued by his faith in Muhammad: “My faith promises paradise in the company of Muhammad and all the Prophets and then slowly the truth came to me, and I knew that I was living but blind”.

The reality then is of the harrowing existence. Existence seems then to be imposed on the Beggar by a mysterious force which the Beggar identifies as Mohammad. The Beggar suffers for it because the paradise which Mohammad is supposed to procure for all believers is not attainable. The Beggar's southward journey is therefore, a rejection of his faith and a determination to till the soil wherever he finds fertile grounds. Makuri and Alu, in whose hut the action of The Swamp takes place, are also victims of circumstances beyond their control. They understand that the destruction of the crops by floods and the disappearance of their sons, Igwezu and Awuchike, are the will of the Serpent who must not be questioned.

The understanding that things happen in both plays by chance and not by divine will as many other characters observe, is another source of grief for the characters. The issue of arbitrariness is explicit in The Swamp where Igwezu and the Beggar, although righteous in conduct, are forsaken while Awuchike, Igwezu's twin brother who is full of impious actions, is rewarded. The situation of the two brothers Igwezu and Awuchike, as stated above is reminiscent of the fate of the thieves in the Bible whom Vladimir alludes to. Just as Igwezu questions the criterion for which divine
competence punishes the righteous, and rewards the impious ones like Awuchike, the tramps impugn the basis for one of the thieves being saved and the other condemned:

Vladimir: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
Estragon: No.
Vladimir: Shall I tell you?
Estragon: No.
Vladimir: It'll pass 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. 10

The inability to understand divine manifestation is the main source of despair in Beckett's *Godot*. Commenting on *Waiting for Godot* Eugene Webb states that,

"The fate of the thieves, one of whom was saved and the other damned according to one of the four accounts that everybody believes, becomes as the play progresses a symbol of a condition of man in an unpredictable and arbitrary universe" 11.

The situation of arbitrariness or chance presupposes the silence or the absence of God, which provides more grounds for human misery. The characters in both plays find themselves in the face of misery, an uncompromising situation without any defined pattern, highlighting chaos as the dominating force in the world
with no question to be asked and no where to go. From an understanding of the gruesome realities of human existence, Samuel Beckett and Wole Soyinka see humanity in continual need for salvation. There are therefore, suggestions in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* that while in existence which origin is obscure, essence can be determined by individual choice and freewill, hence individual salvation. Salvation can also be attained through the benevolence of other persons; that is interpersonal or collective salvation.

Furthermore, both playwrights do not completely ignore the presence of some spiritual essence in determining the fate of humanity. The fact that human action, thought and vision in both plays are directed towards some ultimate reality is indicative of the possibility that divine salvation has a place in their being. Even if God's existence is doubtful as existentialists like Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre show, man has indubitably created Him to give meaning to his own existence. This is reflected in man's eternal quest for some supernal being whom he thinks must be responsible for the existence of the marvels of the universe. Consequently, Beckett's *Godot* must be such a God created by Vladimir and Estragon, while the Serpent of the Swamps and Mohammad of the Muslim North must be patterns of beliefs created by people. The three religions may differ in concept and stature but they represent universal concerns and the verdict that all beliefs in the world culminate in a single search for the unknown. Through that quest, human life is patterned in more meaningful panoply of realities.
At the level of individual salvation, some of the characters in the plays come to an understanding of their fates and in spite of the humiliation, to which they are subjected, make commendable efforts to survive in the face of adversity. Lucky in *Godot* and the blind Beggar in *Swamp Dwellers* stand out distinctly as representations of individual salvation. Lucky, Pozzo's slave, unconditionally submits himself to the burdens of existence. He is certain however, that the residuals from his master's healthy existence are his. Pozzo tells Estragon who, like his friend Vladimir, is unable to do anything to save himself and who shows uncontrollable greed for the chicken bones thrown on the ground by Pozzo that, “in theory the bones go to the carrier” and the carrier of course is Lucky (Beckett 27). When asked why Lucky does not put down his luggage, Pozzo replies that “he wants to impress me so that I can keep him” 12. Similarly, Igwezu's bondsman, the Beggar from the dry North whose plight is even more severe because of his blindness is more conscious of the need to save himself rather than rely on external forces for salvation. His journey from the dry North to the swampy south is in search of a means of surviving. As a guest in Makuri's hut he indicates, against all entreaties by his host to beg like the others, his intention to till the soil where the earth is moist: “I wish to work on the soil. I wish to knead it between my fingers” 13. This therefore, means that in the absence of a divine force that should take care of a desperate humanity, life is in the individual's own hands and he or she is responsible for it by the pattern of choices he or she makes. He is
thrown to the dictates of chance but he must first show proof that he is directly responsible for his own life in an existence whose origin can hardly be satisfactorily explained. This is reflected in the beggar's determination to till the soil though blind. All he needs is a patch of fertile ground by which means he can save himself. A noticeable link between the downtrodden Lucky and the Beggar is the element of revolt that does not necessarily tie them to their bondage, the kind of stubbornness which G.W.F. Hegel suggests "is that freedom which makes itself secure in a solid singleness, and keeps within the sphere of bondage" 14. Lucky does not execute every command given by his master, Pozzo and even Pozzo understands that Lucky has his own temperaments which must not be undermined. In the same light, the Beggar, in spite of the hospitality accorded him by Makuri and Alu, does not totally subject himself to their whims and caprices. He has his convictions and must pursue them to the end without giving the impression that he is completely helpless and cannot express his feelings freely. This way the two characters assert their freedom to act as a means of saving their own lives not necessarily as acts of subjugation to bondage.

Soyinka's philosophy toes the line of Beckett's. The main difference, putting aside other factors, is in the psychological presentation of characters. Soyinka's hero makes considerable personal efforts to survive and all he seeks is the protection of the heavens over his achievements. On the contrary, Becketts's tramps are unable to do anything for themselves but wait for an illusory
Godot to deliver salvation to them. In the end Godot does not come and tramps remain where they started, contemplating suicide as an alternative solution to their misery:

Vladimir: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow (pause).
Unless Godot comes.
Estragon: And if he comes?

Vladimir: We'll be saved. (Beckett 94)

Both works further demonstrate the fact that in addition to attempts by the individual to save himself, people can rely on the resources of each other for a more meaningful existence. The problem of Estragon's hunger is temporarily solved when Vladimir offers him a carrot. At the instant, Estragon realises that their salvation does not necessarily depend on Godot:

Estragon: (his mouth full, vacuously) We're not tied!....
Vladimir: How do you mean tied?

Estragon: Down.
Vladimir: But to whom, by whom?

Estragon: To your man.

Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What idea! No question of it. (Pause) for the moment. (Beckett 20-21).

Estragon's and Vladimir’s worldview here illustrates that God represented by Godot in this sense is important only when humanity is in trouble. Estragon realises at this point the importance of another fellow human in solving problems. Godot instantly becomes insignificant to Estragon when his mouth is full
with carrots, when he is sure of his survival even if it were temporarily so. Estragon in particular is an archetype of the hypocritical Christian who looks for God only to solve his immediate personal problems and once that problem is solved the notion of God is obliterated. He represents the Western man who Nietzsche lambastes in the parable of the mad man who declared the death of God. Nietzsche's startling statement that God was dead meant that humankind no longer believed in God. Humankind had destroyed his faith in God, in other words, they killed God (Nietzsche 95-96). In the same way, Estragon's faith in Godot abates as soon as he achieves his basic needs. Vladimir however realises that their extrication from Godot is just a temporary matter. In the same way, Lucky essentially depends on Pozzo for survival. Put in another way, there exists a mutual dependence between Pozzo and Lucky that is advantageous to the developing consciousness of Lucky. The antithetical natures of Pozzo and Lucky manifestly become a synthesis of master and slave. He carries his burden uncomplaining in order to benefit from the chicken bones thrown on the ground by Pozzo. Lucky is aware of Pozzo's dependency on a slave and this illustrates why he does not execute all instructions. His salvation is dependent on Pozzo but also on his self-consciousness and although Pozzo subjects him to the most excruciating humiliation, Lucky's helplessness is not as manifest as that of the idle Vladimir and Estragon. Alexandre Kojeve puts us in the existential mind of Lucky to demonstrate that the contradictions within him are phenomenal, for as he writes, “in
In *The Swamp Dwellers*, the Beggar's Christlike presence stands as symbol of expiation and enlightenment. His brilliant suggestions about land reclamation are intended to guide the indigenes on how to solve the problem of flood without relying on external forces. As Igwezu's mentor, he prompts him to discover the venality of the Kadiye and also his own naivety. The Beggar's ideas in the play represent Soyinka's ideals of individual lone-act of courage in the effort of saving humanity whenever such an individual possesses the will and the resources. Eldred Jones writes that: this act of salvation is not a mass act; it comes about through the vision and the dedication of individuals who doggedly pursue their vision in spite of the opposition of the very society they seek to save.

This is the essential role of the Beggar in the play. Although Makuri considers his insistent propositions of land reclamation as “profanities,” the Beggar goes on to enforce the idea and as Igwezu's mentor prompts him to denounce the spirituality of the Swamps and come to self-awareness of survival by individual effort. The Beggar's intervention rescues Igwezu and the rest of the dwellers from hopeless dependence on the Serpent, although not without meeting with resistance from Igwezu's parents, Makuri and his wife Alu, who have committed themselves to an unflinching reverence of the Serpent.
At one moment, Igwezu seems sufficiently angry to slice into the rolls of fat beneath the priestly chin. But he restrains himself and eventually allows the terrified Kadiye to scamper away. Then he faces up to his own position and flees knowing that the villagers will demand his blood when they hear how he has humiliated their priest.

The basic theme of *The Swamp dwellers* is misfortune, occasioned by nature, both physical and human. Igwezu is shown as a personified misfortune both in the village as well as in the city. His failure is attributed to the circumstances even beyond his control and he is typified as the victim of the serpent. He suffers against his will simply because he can do nothing to avert suffering. Even though Soyinka is not trying to write classical tragedy, his vision of the world seems to be essentially tragic. Where the neo—Aristotelian poetic would have stipulated a hero with nobleness of status, Soyinka’s hero is a man of quit ordinary status. Moreover, Igwezu’s discovery of the deficiencies of village life and city life alike constitutes the primary thematic content of the play.

*Igwezu*: The city reared itself in the air, and with the strength of its legs of brass kicked the adventurer in the small of his back. (CP I 104)

Here Soyinka uses narrative technique which emerges through a variety of exchanges. His foremost device is to employ contrast and comparisons and to reach judgments. The most
obvious contrast in this play is that between the twin brothers who look alike but behave very differently. There is also contrast between the women in the family – strength and virtue of Alu who had remained faithful to Makuri despite temptations from visiting traders. This is well narrated by her husband.

Soyinka introduces another major character a beggar to establish contracts and comparisons in between and among the characters. From beggar’s narration we gather that he is compared to Igwezu in most respects, particularly of his misfortunes. But he is quite contrasted with Igwezu in his character as a dignified but confident and calm person of courage in the effort of saving humanity whenever such an individual possesses the will and the resources.

The hospitality shown towards the Beggar by Makuri and his wife, when he arrives in their hut in the Swamps reflects another dimension of interpersonal salvation which is often rooted in what is commonly referred to as “African hospitality,” whereby the sorrows and joys of an individual are shared by other members of the community. Makuri's sympathy towards the stranger is quite explicit. He calls him the “afflicted of the gods” and his wife washes the mud on the Beggar's feet, dries them then rubs with ointment, an action borrowed from the anointing of the feet of Jesus by the Magdalene.

The examples above, of interpersonal salvation illustrate the existentialist idea that man is the future of man in the sense that man's problems in an ailing universe can partly be solved through
the initiative and the benevolence of his fellow man. But once humanity is conscious of its commitment to individual, interpersonal or collective efforts to make existence tolerable, there is also a need to impose a spiritual pattern on its existence, whether it is traditional African, Christian or Islamic. To a critic like John Leeland Kundert-Gibbs, “hope or expectation springs from a sense of lack, emptiness or insecurity” 17. He consequently identifies Godot with the void at the centre of being in his Zen Buddhism and Chaos theory. Following his theory therefore, it is neither the Zen Buddhism, nor Godot, nor the Serpent of the Swamps, nor Muhammad that imposes its essence on humanity but humanity's yearning to fill a void by imposing a spiritual pattern on itself. By imposing a divine pattern on themselves, Vladimir and Estragon achieve some degree of meaning, what Eugene Webb describes as “an illusory, but desperately defended pattern”.18 Coming to physical appearances, the beggar is tall and thin and a Muslim, which is quite contrast to Kadiye, who is short and fat.

The foremost technique used by Soyinka in the play is the setting – a hut on stilts, built on one of the scattered semi – firm is lands in the swamps which clearly give us an idea that the play is a rural one. The same setting runs throughout the play indicating that there will be no change in the lives of the characters though there are so many enhances and exits. The entrances and exits are silent in case of all the characters except with Kadiye whose entrance and exit is accompanied by drumming – striking and spectacular again an African based technique. The entrances and
exits in this play are particularly judged. Through having the Kadiye enter, then leave and then return; and through having Igwezu arrive in between the two visits of the Kadiye, Soyinka ensures that only gradually are all the characters brought together on the stage at the same time.

Another technique Soyinka uses is the narrative technique, where through revelations one comes to know the tragedies of Igwezu as well as the beggar-in course of time. Though Kadiye does not reveal his villainy character, it is Igwezu who poses questions and makes him reveal that his god is impotent.

Exposure to the irreligious acts of the religious men in a very chance man way, though Kadiye who reminds us about Chaucer's religious character in his The Canterbury tales – The summons Kadiye is the main priest of the swamps by profession, he is anything but pious. Through Kadiye Soyinka introduces us to the serpent cult which is meaningless in the eyes of Igwezu. The impotence of the god gradually becomes clear to Igwezu's mind from several inexplicable disasters that confront him, both in the city and the swamps.

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