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WE BORN TO DIE: *WAITING FOR GODOT* IS ACTUALLY WAITING FOR DEATH

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ABSTRACT

Death is an undeniable universal truth. None can escape death. Every mortal being is liable to decay and will die one day. We patiently or impatiently wait for death throughout our life. Sometimes it comes easily and sometimes it comes in one's life in a long suffering way. As it seems to me that the ultimate destination of our life is to move towards death. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a revolutionary creation, highlights the issues of waiting for symbolic Godot who never comes; to me it is waiting for death. It is not certain whether he will come or not but death will certainly come and it does so. When it was first staged on 5th January in 1953 it made history in theatre. Play is actually for performance not for reading. Watching play performed on the stage by actors and actress as an audience makes better than reading. It was first staged in English in 1955. The performance on the stage force people to think about their way of life and the very existence on earth. The role of theatre is undeniable as its first director Peter Hall recalls- "Film is simile, life like; theatre is metaphor about life itself. (16)" the New Theatre emerged in England in the 1950s. Adamov, Ionesco and Beckett were the pioneer of the New Theatre Movement. They continuously constituted the theatre of Absurd, a genre popularized by Martin Esslin. *En attendant Godot* (original version in French) or *Waiting for Godot* unfolds the absurdity of human existence and their suffering and directly or indirectly clarifies their wating. Waiting for what – I would like to justify waiting for death throughout this research article.

Keywords: Existence, Death, Waiting for Godot, Maya, Mystery.

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INTRODUCTION

When a man is born fate is written for his/her that he/she will die one day or in a certain day, naturally in biological way or accidentally. The person concerned does not know when or how, and then the question comes who know this? Of course some one knows. This someone is Godot! May be he is Godot. Why are always he and not she? And who is this Godot? And the Time, the dangerous Time passes on and no one knows about this mystery. It remains unanswered to all people living in this world. And one day he dies and goes somewhere else, does not leave any clue to other living beings- may he goes to Godot. To me, in Samuel

Beckett's history making play *Waiting for Godot*, Godot symbolizes- final destination, men's ultimate abode, where they will find their unanswered questions. When human beings unable to apprehend anything they call it mystery. Godot is this Maya or mystery or death or the final destination. And all people wait for Godot like Estragon and Vladimir or with them throughout their their life.

Samuel Beckett's immortal creation *Waiting for Godot- a tragi-comedy in two acts* is an absurdist play, where 'absurd' means 'out of harmony'. In this play everything is out of harmony. It does not fulfill expectations of audience of readers. Once Jean Paul Sartre, the noted French writer and philosopher, in a lecture entitled *Mythe et realite du theatre* (Myth and Reality in the theatre) in 1966 (cited Braby 1984:57), that these playwrights (absurd) were venturing 'un theatre critique'. They had indulged with ideas of plot and characters and this lack of plot and impossibility characters, according to Sartre, constituted the subject of their plays. This plotless plot and characterless characters then are subject to a series of senseless and, thus, actionless action. This enables them to achieve the writing "degree zero" formulated by another famous French critic Ronald Barthes in 1953. The philosophical and literary scholars often consider Beckett's waiting for Godot including other works to be part of the movement of the theatre of the Absurd, a form of theatre which stems from the absurdist philosophy of Albert Camus. Absurdism is also a part of Existentialism, pioneered by Soren Kierkegaard. This philosophy asserts that inherent meaning is very well exists in this universe but human beings are unable to find it due to their mental or philosophical limitations. Thus they are liable to doomed in the absurd or the absolute absurdity of existence in lack of intrinsic purpose or action. 'Karma' or action is everything. it defines the definition of life or it is the life force. The characters in this play lack action. Estragon cries "nothing to be done." As they have nothing to do they wait for death passively.

Thus all the happenings in this play are action less action. The two most important characters in this play Vladimir and Estragon wait endlessly in vain for the arrival of some unknown Godot. The play opens on an outdoor scene, "A country road. A tree. Evening." Where two tramps: the brooding Vladimir and struggling Estragon who is unable to take his boots off from his ailing feet:

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take pull his boot. He pulls off it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before:

Enter Vladimir.

Estragon: [Giving up again] nothing to be done. (1)

As they have nothing to do Estragon suddenly decides to leave. Vladimir reminds him they must stay there and wait for Godot. They cannot decide where and how to meet with him. They only know they wait at a tree and the tree is leafless-devoid of life, signifies life itself. They use various means to pass their time but they fail. Estragon suggests that they hang themselves:

Estragon: let's hang ourselves immediately!

Vladimir: from a bough? [They go towards the tree.] I would trust it.

Estragon: we can always try.

Vladimir: go ahead.

Estragon: After you.

Vladimir: No no, you first. (9-10)

But they abandon the idea of hanging themselves. They leave it on Godot:

Estragon: don't let's do anything. It's safe.

Vladimir: let's wait and see what he says.

Estragon who?

Vladimir: Godot. (10)

Their only work is to wait. They even fear to dream. If one tries to reveal his dream other forbades it, like the suppressed sub-conscious mind by the dominant conscious mind. And Vladimir and Estragon are inseparable. And I think Estragon represents sub-conscious mind where Vladimir represents conscious mind:

Vladimir: I felt lonely.

Estragon: I had a dream.

Vladimir: Don't tell me.

Estragon: I dreamt that-

Vladimir: DON'T TELL ME! (8)

Vladimir, the conscious mind, emphatically hushed up Estragon, 6t5he sub-conscious mind. Because dreams arise hope to live. But they do not want to live and they wait to embrace death and wait for Godot. Godot is the phenomena. They are so engrossed with the thought of Godot that they even fear to dream. Even the audience and the readers are unable to escape from Godot mania.

Pozzo and Lucky are polar opposite to Vladimir and Estragon but like them, they are also inseparable. One does not exist without the other. Their relationship defines by the binary opposition master/slave-the dominant and the dominated. Binary is not always opposition but it also signifies mutually dependable. "Pozzo's relationship with Lucky, too", as GJV Prasad utters in his Introduction in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, "is a symbiotic relationship, the one needing the other to give purpose to their lives. If Vladimir and estragon have a relationship of friendship, in a horizontal democratic structure of equality the other two are independent on the vertical axis, one of power and other authoritarianism."(xxiv)

"A terrible cry" welcomes the entrance of Lucky, a silent burden bearer slave with a rope tied around his neck and Pozzo his dominant master holds the other end. Pozzo barks abusive orders to Lucky and he silently obeys him and never harks back. Dancing and thinking are only his free movement. His only first and last "thinking" is a disjointed monologue. His long soliloquy begins as a relatively coherent lecture on theology but "quickly dissolves into mindless verbosity," that irritates other until Vladimir pulls off his hat. They also leave. And now Vladimir and Estragon are alone again they are alone like the Ancient Mariner in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony. (14)

Really they have nobody to take pity on their suffering soul. So they wait for Godot named death.

Actually we are filling in our time between birth and death by playing various role imposed on us by an unseen or invisible authority like Godot. After all, as GJV Prasad suggests, that the gist of Lucky's famous speech is that we are only certain of death in this indifferent universe. A paraphrase of Lucky's speech would go like this:

We are told by authorities of the existence of god who loves us in an arbitrary manner, but we cannot be sure of this; in spite of our general progress through our work and games we only decay; we waste and pine" (36)

We, the helpless creatures, are let to the possibility of death even the earth around us dwelling into a graveyard of stone.

Croker Andrew discusses about the pronunciation of Godot. The name Godot is pronounced in Britain and in Ireland with the emphasis on the first syllable (/ˈɡɒdɒʊ/ **GOD-oh**); in North America it is usually pronounced with an emphasis on the second syllable(/ɡəˈdɒʊ/ **gə-DOH**). Beckett himself said that the emphasis should be on the first syllable. So Godot is God. But who is this this god? There is no answer. It is beyond our imagination. In this play the two boys only say that Godot will come some day. But he never turns up. No hope remains there. Eva Metman describe Godot as "...a kind of distant mirage". She further argues:

Godot has several traits in common with the image of God as we know it from the Old and the New testament...he might 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 be 'in store for us not in store us' seems to show clearly that Beckett points to the sterility of a consciousness that expects and waits the old activity of God or gods. (125)

She continues,

“Godot is explicitly vague, merely an empty promise, corresponding to the Luke-worm piety absence or suffering in the tramps. Waiting for him has become a habit which Beckett calls a ‘guarantee of dull inviolability...’ an adaptation to the meaninglessness of life”. (125)

So nothing can define Godot like death. Bernard Dukore develops a triadic theory in *Ildi, Gogo and the absent Godot*, based on Sigmund Freud’s Trinitarian description of the psyche in *The Ego and Id* (1923) and the usage of onomastic techniques. Dukore defines the characters by what they lack: the rational Go-go embodies the incomplete ego. The missing pleasure principles: (e) go. Di-di (id-id) - who is more instinctual and irrational- is seen as the backward id or subversion of the rational principle. Godot fulfills the function of the super ego or moral standards. Pozzo and lucky are just re-iterations of the main protagonist. Dukore finally sees Beckett’s play as a metaphor for the futility of man’s existence when salvation is expected from an external entity, and the self is denied introspection. So what are they anxious for? Martin Heidegger enunciates in his *The Concept of Anxiety*, anxiety as a confrontation with nothingness. If we ask more particularly what the object of anxiety is, then the answer [...] must be that is nothing. They are anxious for Godot and since Godot does not appear- Godot is nothing. But death must come and they wait for death and Godot remains unseen like death.

Conclusion

Ronald Barthes in his *The Death of the Author* argues, “once the author is gone, the claim to ‘decipher’ a text becomes quiet useless. To give an Author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing.” As there is no imposed meaning on Godot, I would like to call Godot symbolic of death. Freud reveals that subjects compulsively repeated painful or traumatic experience in direct contradiction to the primary of pleasure principles. Freud calls it beyond of pleasure principles, ‘Thanatos’ or the death drive and suggests that the primary purpose of life is to find the correct path to death and in this play Vladimir and Estragon do so. Subjectivity is born in trauma and desire is crucial. Vladimir and Estragon desire for Godot but there is only hollow. If desire is what hollows us into nonbeing for Jacques Lacan, it just the same for Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* argues that human beings can never be identical with themselves because desire is the very essence of being. Since to desire is to lack, what makes us what we are in an absence of being. Terry Eagleton in his article *Nothing New* argues that, “desire is just the way that the God is built into our material bodies and seizes us independently of the abstract will. It is what orientates our existence’ a penchant predilection which is radically pair to choice. (Xvii)” Our, for what Aginus calls *beatitude* or happiness is not in itself optional, any more than our appetite or food is. It the way our body are biased and ballasted towards what is desirable. For Aquinas desire is infinite, just as it for psychoanalytical successors. Dissatisfaction is our normative condition and the perfection we seek would signal the death of our humanity. The human creature is the neurotic animal, as Freud thinks, which is to say that, because a degree of repression is essential for us to operate, human beings are sick with desire. Vladimir and Estragon are also sick with desire- desire for Godot and that is only achievable through death and they wait for Godot, it is in pure mathematical equation waiting for Godot is equal to waiting for death.

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