**Dr. S. CHOUCHANE**

**3rd Year Literature Module**

**Academic Year: 2024/2025**

**Modernist Aspects in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953)**

**The Theatre of the Absurd**

Reaction to 2nd world war (post 2nd world war, late 50s)

Based on the idea of existentialism (philosophical movement of late 19th and 20th century)

A form of drama in which normal conventions and dramatic structure are ignored or modified in order to present life as meaningless. It emphasizes the absurdity of human existence by employing disjointed, repetitious and meaningless dialogue, purposeless and confusing situations and plots that lack logical development.

**Characteristics:**

* Dialogue that is comically familiar and yet disturbingly unfamiliar, simultaneously ordinary and frightening. (lack of communication)
* Contradictory and ambiguous characterizations.
* Comic yet menacing mood characteristic of mod 20th century English tragicomedy.
* Plot featuring reversals and surprises that can be both funny and emotionally moving.
* Vagueness about time, place
* The value of language is reduced; in fact, what happens on the stage transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters.
* Extensive use of pauses and silences
* Unconventional ending that leaves at least some questions unresolved.

Samuel Becket’s *Waiting for Godot* as an Absurdist Play

Samuel Becket is a famous writer who introduced the concept of absurdity, nothingness, nihilism and meaninglessness of life. He represented the absurdity in the life of the people. He believed that life is in a circular form, from where it starts, at the same point it ends. There is no concept of religion no moral values, no concept of time and space in absurdity. Absurdity is a word that can be explained by reasoning however the fault is a familiar world that in the universe that is suddenly deprived of illusion, end of light, man feels as stranger. He is in an irradiate exile because he is deprived of memories of lost homeland as much a he lacks the hope of Promised Land to come. This diversity between man and his life, actor and his sating truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. It is very clear from the very word "Absurd" that it means nonsensical, opposed to reason, something silly, foolish, senseless, ridiculous and disorderly. Actually the 'Absurd Theatre' believes that humanity's plight is purposeless in an existence, which is out of harmony with its surroundings.

*Waiting for Godot* is an absurd play for not only its plot is loose but its characters are also just mechanical puppets with their incoherent discussion. And above than all, its theme is unexplained. It is an absurd play for it is devoid of characterization and motivation along with the no result. Though characters are present but are not recognizable for whatever they do and whatever they present is purposeless. So far as its dialogue technique is concerned, it is purely absurd as there is no witty repartee and pointed dialogue. What a reader or spectator hears is simply the incoherent babbling which does not have any clear and meaningful ideas. So far as the action and theme is concerned, it kisses the level of Absurd Theatre. After the study of this play, we come to know that nothing special happens in the play and we observe no significant change in setting. Though a change occurs but it is only that now the tree has sprouted out four or five leaves. We can get an idea from the following statement—

*“Nothing happens, nobody comes ... nobody goes, it's awful!”*

The beginning, middle and end of the play do not rise up to the level of a good play, so absurd. Though its theme is logical and rational yet it lies in umbrage.

Moreover, *Waiting for Godot* can also be regarded as an absurd play because it is different from "poetic theatre". Neither it makes a considerable use of dream and fantasy nor does it employ conscious poetic language. The situation almost remains unchanged and an enigmatic vein runs throughout the play. The mixture of comedy and near tragedy proves baffling. In Act I, we are not sure as to what attitude we should adopt towards the different phases of its non-action. The ways, of which the two tramps pass their time, seems as if they were passing their lives in a transparent deception. Godot remains a mystery and curiosity still holds a sway. Here we know that their endless waiting seems to be aimless.