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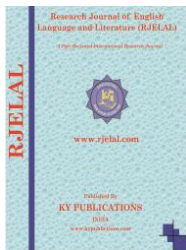
THEATRE OF ABSURD: A CRITICAL STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO SAMUEL BECKETT'S *WAITING FOR GODOT*, AND BADAL SIRCAR'S *EVAM INDRAJIT*

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ABSTRACT

Theatre Of Absurd is mainly a Western phenomenon, this term coined by the English critic Martin Esslin in his 1961 book Theater Of Absurd and subsequently associated with the styles of many playwrights, like Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Tardieu and Harold Pinter. During the 1940s-1960s, this distinct style of drama was written largely by the European playwrights with spreading its popularity beyond France. By rebelling against theatrical traditions the 'Theater of the Absurd' is shaping the characters in an absurd sense to reveal their pessimistic outlook toward life and society. This absurdity arose in the life and society at that time for several reasons and due to socio-political changes the West was more inclined to scientific temperament which resulted in growing disbelief toward God and religion. As a consequence the so-called Darwinism emerged with two World Wars totally changing the human concept of the world as a safe place (Abraham, 2009). Due to all these events, a major transformation took place in the society with sensing the difficulty to communicate human's ideas and sensibilities properly. The Theater Of Absurd and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, and Bidal Sarcar's *Evam Indrajit*. The most stunning thing about these plays of this social event is that in spite of their opposing of the rules they are productive. Both *Waiting For Godot* and *Evam Indrijat*, symbolize the hollowness, avoid and articulate futility with purposeless and meaningless existence. In both plays the group of onlookers do not appear to get a handle on anything critical, important, or conventional and plays have no sensible or intelligible plot.

Introduction

With its significant presence in the pre-modern world, theater vibrantly expresses human experience and different scenario of human life. This strongest medium is immensely popular on the global platform of drama for not only representing the world but also for its societal transformation power within its structures of consciousness. The word theater is derived from the Greek word 'theatre on' which signifies 'a place for seeing' that

consistently searching the meaning of life. As a participatory ritual, theatrical experience formulates a strong interface between the actor and spectator by cyclic interchange of reactions. The informative and educational features of theater help in increasing awareness about significant issues, like social, political and educational aspects, among its specific target audience. Therefore, Bert O states that "the real intimacy of the theater is not the intimacy of being within its world, but of being

present at its world's origination under all the constraints visible an invisible of immediate actuality."

The modern theater is dealing with life in realistic, naturalistic and surrealistic ways. However, the Theater of the Absurd is a new form of drama, originated from France after the Second World War, going beyond superficial rationalizations of the modern drama to find the deeper meaning of life. While every theater has its own artistic features in respect of its special background and social demands, the Theater of the Absurd uses multiple artistic features to express a tragic theme in a comic form. The absurdist plays shake up our mindset by revealing the strange isolation of human beings in this modern society (Weiss, 2013). As such, we can observe the ambiguous relationship between consciousness and perceptual world in the postmodern drama by playwrights, like Samuel Beckett and Badal Sircar. By using the modern theater as an innovative dramatic device, they not only transform the plot and characterization of the same but also being able to give a valuable message to the society. In the Literature Review, the discussion will be around striving for existence and how they influence the artistic features of the Theater of the Absurd.

Obviously the features of absurd plays include anti-character, anti-language, anti-drama and anti-plot. Contrary to the conventional plays in 'Theater of the Absurd' no regular rules are followed while staging a story. Since it does not have any normal starting, developing and resolving on-stage story, therefore common people will find difficulty in understanding the character's words as well as behaviors. In the traditional plays the life is represented in realistic, naturalistic or symbolic ways with proper resolution to the conflict. However, the focal point of the absurdist plays rather lies in the poetic images and dream situations with almost no conflict during the entire performance (Power, 2008). Recurring situations represent human position in life and anonymous characterization with completely unmotivated, purposeless and nonsensical acts. The construction of anti-hero characterization with pathetic and guilty features will compel the audience to alienate

themselves from what is going on the stage. In this regard '*Waiting for Godot*' can be considered as a benchmark in the dramatic career of the absurd playwright Samuel Beckett as the themes demand the audience to be sensible and face the situation consciously.

"The Theatre of the Absurd shows the world as an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without ever understanding the full meaning of these strange patterns of events, as newly arrived visitors might watch life in a country of which they have not yet mastered the language." (p. 5).

In drama plot is an indispensable part. While in traditional drama plots are arranged in a logical order, in absurdist plays they are represented in a rather fractured and scattered way. However, in the theater of absurd surprising or obscure nature of the plot is often producing no end or results. For example, in *Waiting for Godot* the audience cannot guess what the two boys will do or say in the next step. From beginning to end it simply appears endless wait or bizarre words. But it can't be stated that *Waiting for Godot* does not have any realistic essence. The unexplained words and mysterious behaviors reveal the meaning of human existence in the modern society with signifying nothingness as an essence (Abolfateh & Khalid, 2006). Since in the modern society emptiness of heart and people seeking their own status form the atmosphere, therefore anti-plot constitutes an important feature of the 'Theater of the Absurd'

Research Methodology

The present paper will focus on critical assessment of Samuel Beckett's works and compare it with Badal Sircar's works. While detailed study has been done on the existence of human being full of suffering, cruelty and danger, the devaluation of human life in modern society is also discussed to address the basic existential problems. The works of Beckett highlight on absurdity, self-identification and isolation which clearly prove to be useful for research work on human interrelationship (Chandra, 2010). Further, the opinions of some prominent theater critics have been used to reflect on the

reality of life in a bleak society. Since people are leading an aimless, obscure and tired life, therefore analysis has been done to present the 'Theater of Absurd' in an acceptable and realistic way.

This research paper will mainly focus on the following aspects-

- a) Loss of human values which endangers the existence of human beings
- b) Dissimilation of the society
- c) Meaninglessness questioning the basic human existence in the modern society
- d) Isolation which brings emptiness of the society

Different scenario will be considered to explore the crisis and cruelty of human beings in the context of the survival struggle of the people. While some traditional playwrights include some extensive themes, like politics, economics and culture, in their dramas, the pioneer of the absurd plays, on the contrary, revealed their inner feelings to identify the human status in this bleak period. This study analyses the reasons of people believing metamorphic things. The effect of war totally destroys human values and as such they perceived the abnormal things, like disease, death and crime, as normal (Crow & Banfield, 1996). Materiality engulfed the humanity and religious disbelief questioned the existence of gods. However, by analyzing the works of Beckett and other absurd playwrights, it can be stated that they tried to explain the new meaning of survival in this apparently meaningless world as 'hope against hope'.

Aims and Objectives of Paper

The aim of this present paper is to find a positive message on absurdity, self-identification, ambiguity and human interrelationship in this materialistic society. The *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and *Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar have been taken in this context to analyze the basic questions of existentialism philosophy.

The objectives of this paper are as follows-

- a) Study of waiting in *Waiting for Godot* as an essential and inevitable characteristic of human existence.
- b) Recognition of nothingness as essence and realistic approach to life.
- c) The uttering of bizarre words and limitation of language can be treated as an instrument of thought to express valid statements.
- d) Study of characters in *Evam Indrajit* in context of absurdities of existence.
- e) Impact of internal conflicts, inhumanity and worthlessness of human existence on the portrayal of characters in Sircar's plays.
- f) Whether the contemporary situation confined the life of a modern individual within a fixed dimension in *Evam*.

Conclusion

According to Shakespeare, this world is a stage where all men and women are performing their parts. Thereby, all the players should have the responsibility to perform their roles with artistic excellence. Theater, irrespective of Western or Indian ones, has made a strong impact on people with its pragmatic and philosophical approaches. Friedrich Nietzsche clearly observed that sufferings make the human beings strong enough to face the challenges smartly. Absurd drama believes that meaningless life will ultimately questions the basic existence of human beings. Their view to accept the world, as it is, and rejection of language, principles and realities represent the absurdist plays in a powerful way. They completely

Indicate that nothingness is the essence of life and unconsciousness of oneself as well as space is the reality. Recognition of the absurdity and communicating the incommunicable will bring readymade solutions to the problems in life. Since ultimate truths cannot be represented in black and white, therefore the realization of basic existential questions will bring solution to the mysteries of life. Both, Samuel Beckett and Badal Sircar, have done experimentation with characters, language and plot to put emphasis on fragmentation and elements of the absurd. In *Waiting for Godot* minimalist style has

been followed, along with providing a multiple possible interpretations. The characters of Vladimir and Estragon represent a combination of tragic and comedy to convey a strong message on complex issues. Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* also conveyed in line with Beckett that struggle will make the human beings stronger. As a consequence, the human spirit will win and at the same time by their own perseverance they will find the inner meaning of life in this world of absurd.

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