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❖ *Waiting for Godot*

- **Bring out the significance of Lucky's tirade**

Beckett, the last modernist, weaves the plot of his seminal play *Waiting for Godot* very minutely where words are not important but the ideas are important. Lucky's tirade is one of the finest examples to place the present play in the rank of a modernist drama. Lucky's tirade or harangue is pluri-significant.

Lucky's tirade has been described as a 'holocaust of phrases' on account of its being formless, unpunctuated and unsyntaxed. In spite of its unintelligibility of the speech we can identify three major parts in it which imply – that the existence of an uncaring and arbitrary God is in doubt; that in spite of learning and progress man is doomed to decay; that there is a 'cosmic petrification' and the earth 'in the great cold, great dark appears to be an abode of stone'. There are three thematic outlines in Lucky's thought-speech –absence of God, shrinking of man's world as chaos (Disruption of communication). We should not however, impose any coherent pattern of thought in Lucky's mechanically uttered tirade as its structural importance lied in its being a parody and Beckett to be so. The speech is a parody of rational logical statement included in by people in normal condition. Beckett designs it to describe lack of order, meaning or purpose which conventionally supported to cohere in the world and human life. By subverting the syntactical order and logical sequences of sentences, the speech denies the presence of order sequential logic and coherence in the world itself. The speech denies the traditional world- view the origin of the origin of man's religious thoughts and of divine power of deities, man's relation to the world, to nature and to God. It also mocks at man's faith in God in the concept of human learning knowledge and progress and demonstrated through its comic tone and manner the collapse of western culture. The structural positions of 6the characters on the stage during Lucky's tirade and their comical fall down have been choreographically performed to form a tree figuration that connects original sin as well as the tree of life. Through the assistance of Vladimir and Estragon Lucky regains consciousness and is made to stand on his feet, by this could be done only by putting the bag, basket and other loads back on him i.e. by making Lucky

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get the feel of those objects. This stage image shows deeply Lucky's habituation of his slavish existence. Moments of freedom cause discomfort to him and he desired to be ordered back into his second self of the beast of burden.

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▪ **Bring out the significance of the title of *Waiting for Godot***

Since its publication Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* has risen a lot of controversy. It is the title of the play that draws much critical attentions. The play was originally written in French along with another play *Eleutheria*. The original French title was *En attendant Godot* (literally, while awaiting Godot).

There are two key words in the title 'waiting' and 'Godot'. The original French title of the play put emphasis on the verb 'waiting' Rather than its noun 'Godot'. Even Martin Esslin holds the view that the subject of the play is not 'Godot' but 'waiting'. Duckworth in his book *Angels of Darkness* shows the Jungian influence in Beckett's title. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung tells of an uncle who stopped him in the street one day and asked him, "Do you know how the Devil tortures souls in hell?... He keeps them waiting." Jung was reminded of this remark while reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* where he experienced the same feeling of waiting for something to happen.

The play is direct presentation of 'waiting'. As soon as the curtain arises, we find two tramps Vladimir and Estragon, are 'waiting for Godot'. Waiting conditions everything in the play. It is to lighten the tedium of endless waiting that the tramps, resort to various devices to pass the time. This waiting is compulsive--- Estragon suggests more than once that they might leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they dare not --- they are waiting for Godot. Estragon agrees, though reluctantly, every time. The various attitudes of the tramps enhance this theme of waiting, for example, they go to one edge and then to the other of the stage and look into the distance, with the eyes shielded by the hand. They also tell worn out jokes and anecdotes to each other. They indulge in repetitive, pointless activities. Each act ends with a respite in waiting, but it is made clear that waiting must go on the next day and then the next until Godot comes, of which they do not seem to harbour any real hope.

The sense of waiting in the play, is intensified with the sense of nihilism. Vladimir and Estragon, have traveled for towards nihilism, they have not fully achieved it. They still retain enough remnants of hope to be tormented by despair. And in place of hope as a dynamic, they have expectancy. This is the main motif of the play. The two tramps are in a physical and in a mental state in which

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nothing happens and time stands still. Their main pre occupation is to pass time. They realise the futility of their exercises and they are filling up the hours. In this sense their waiting is mechanical; it is the same thing as not moving. In another sense it is an obligation. They have to remain where they are, though were doing so and would like to leave. Very significantly both the acts end with resentment:

“Yes, let’s go

(They don’t move)”

This mood of expectancy has a universal validity, because whenever we wait, we are expectant even though we are almost certain that our wait in will be rewarded.

Similarly, the other important key term of the title ‘Godot’ has excited much curiosity. Beckett himself does not give us any specific identity of the person, rather he said in an interview, “If I knew I would have said so in the play.” The word ‘Godot’ has been interpreted variously as happiness, eternal life, God, love, hope, death, silence, De Gaulle, future, a famous French cyclist, a Paris street notorious for its prostitutes etc. The word’s association with the English ‘God’ is controversial. It has been said that the word has been formed from English ‘God’ and French eau(waiting). It has also been said that ‘Godot’ is spoken Irish for God. Hugh Kenner has connected the name with his famous theory of the ‘card centaur’ by mentioning the name of a French racing cyclist whose last name was Godean. A critic, wishing to pinpoint the foolishness, trying to identify Godot too closely, said, “Godot is that character for whom to tramps are waiting at the edge of a road and who does not come’. Again, Godot may be representative in Beckett’s contemporary terms, of some authority who has promised protection to the tramps who may be regraded as symbolic of the ordinary French citizen in France under the German oppression. Or he may be considered a link in the Resistance Movement, with Estragon and Vladimir two Resistance workers who have been told to contact him.

The source of the full title thus caused much anxiety. The most convincing suggestion in this case comes from Eric Bentley who traces the title to Balzac’s play *Marcadet*. In Balzac’s play the return of a person named Godeans anxiously awaited, the frustration of waiting is as much a part of Balzac’s play as it is of Beckett’s. Martin Esslin has heartily endorsed another suggestion and so have

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several commentators. According to another suggestion, the title of Beckett's play comes from Simone Will's play *Waiting for God*. It has pointed out that Beckett and Simone knew each other well and that Beckett's play appeared a year after the publication of Simon's. The influence of Simone on Beckett is thus a distinct possibility. If this view is acceptable then *Waiting for Godot* can be understood as a religious allegory. According to yet another view, the source of the title for the play was Odets's *Waiting for Lefty*. It is believed that the name 'Odets' might have itself suggested to Beckett the name 'Godot'. There is still another possibility that Beckett's title may have its source in Tom Kromer's book called *Waiting for Nothing*.

Whatever may be the controversies the title of the play focuses number of suggestions of meaning or waiting and it is the waiting for Godot who may stand for God, or for the meaning of life, or for death or for something else.