

Explain the significance of the title of *Waiting for Godot*.

The two key words in the Beckett's play are 'waiting' and 'Godot'. These two words are the keys to the title as well as to the theme. Since the main theme of the play is waiting for some Godot, the play is named so. But the question regarding Godot's identity remains unanswered till the end of the play. To some, Godot stands for God. He is a weakened or diminutive form of the word God. The characters of the play wait for him so that he may deliver them from misery and suffering or from their miserable existence. Godot may therefore suggest the intervention of a supernatural agency. Or perhaps Godot stands for a mythical human being whose arrival is expected to change the human situation. Yet another interpretation of Godot relates to Death. Godot may represent Death, and people are waiting for death to come. Interestingly, although Godot fails to appear in the play, he is as real a character as any of those whom we actually see.

However the subject of the play is not Godot; it is waiting. The act of waiting is indeed an essential characteristic of the human condition. We all wait in our life for something or other- for hope, for relief, for redemption, for salvation, for freedom and the like. So throughout their lives, human beings wait for something and Godot simply represents the objective of their waiting- an event, a thing, a person, death etc. Samuel Beckett has in this play depicted a situation which has a great human application.

At first sight the play does not appear to have any particular relationship with the human condition or existence. For instance, we see hardly any inclination to identify ourselves with the two garrulous tramps (Estragon and Vladimir) who are indifferent to all the concerns of civilized life. It apparently seems that Godot might have some significance but he does not even appear on the stage. Soon we are made to realize that Vladimir and Estragon are waiting endlessly and that their waiting is of a particular kind. Although they may say that they are waiting for Godot, they cannot say who or what Godot is. Nor can they be sure that they are waiting at the right place or on the right day, or what could happen when Godot comes or what could happen if they stopped waiting. They have no watches, no time tables and there is no one from whom they can get much information. They do not have the essential knowledge and are therefore ignorant.

Besides being ignorant, the tramps also represent boredom and ennui. They produce in us a sense of baffled helplessness which we experience when forced to remain in a situation which we do not understand and over which we have no control. All that they do is to seek ways to pass the time in the situation which we do not understand and over which we have no control. They tell stories, sing songs, play verbal games, pretend to be Pozzo and Lucky, and do physical exercises. But all these activities are mere stop-gaps serving only to pass the time. They understand this perfectly. "Come on, Gogo", pleads Didi, while talking about the two thieves crucified with Christ, "return the ball, can't you, once in a way?" and Estragon does. As Estragon says later, "We don't manage too badly, eh Didi, between the two of us... We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist." Here we have the very essence of boredom. All of us have to do something to kill time.

Thus the play is a direct presentation of waiting, ignorance, boredom etc. And in the waiting of the two tramps, we the audience recognize our own experience. We may never have waited by a tree on a deserted country road for a distant acquaintance to keep his appointment, but we have certainly experienced other situations in which we have waited and waited continuously. In other words, we can discover a common ground between ourselves and the two tramps who are waiting for Godot. We feel with them and with millions of others who have known ignorance and boredom. Here is then the recognizable theme of the play and it is this which accounts for the play's wide-spread appeal.

Other conditions of waiting are expectancy and hopefulness. These two are fulfilled by the tramps. Their waiting is mechanical. They have to remain where they are, though they resent doing so and would like to leave. So still another condition of waiting- that is boredom and unwillingness is also fulfilled. The act of waiting also makes us experience the flow of time. To wait means to experience the action of time, which changes constantly. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion. Therefore we may conclude that endless waiting is the central theme of *Waiting for Godot*. And hence the title is obviously an appropriate one.