

CHAPTER: IV



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Conclusion: A Comparative Perspective

The comparative study of “Absurdity in Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* and Satish Alekar’s *Mahanirvan*” enables us to note the similarities and differences in the absurdity depicted in the plots of the above plays of Beckett and Alekar. The similarities and differences may be a result of the peculiar familial, social, religious, political and cultural traditions to which these writers belong to.

Both Beckett and Alekar belong to different countries, different literary traditions, cultures and languages. However, they have some similarities. Both writers believe that human life is absurd and all human actions are futile. This is the common theme in both the plays. Use of poetic language is also a common aspect of both the plays. The detailed analysis of Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* and Satish Alekar’s *Mahanirvan*, show that both these plays are common in theme, they explore the absurdity of human life.

The title of the play *Endgame* owes its origin to the game of Chess and resembles the death in human life. This play is centered on the theme of ‘Death’. The title of the play *Mhanirvan* also suggests death. The only difference is that *Endgame* represents the hours before death and *Mhanirvan* represents the time after death. Both the plays revolve around ‘death’. In both the plays ‘Death is the central concept.

In many absurd plays, characters are depicted in a trapped situation. In both these plays the playwrights depict their characters in a trapped situation. In *Endgame* all the characters are trapped in endless and cyclical situation. In *Mahanirvan* Alekar depicts his protagonist Bhaurao trapped between life and death.

In both these plays, characters are more compassionate towards the life. Hamm in *Endgame* and Bhaurao in *Mhanirvan* are very much compassionate about life. Hamm's desire to go towards the other mammals of the south, his desire to feel the light on his face, his desire to have a central position, his curiosity about the outer world, his interest in the seed planted by the Clov, all these reveal his compassion for life. In *Mhanirvan* Bhaurao wants to meet his wife even after his death, his evergreen ambition to have one more child suggests his compassion towards life. His dialogue:

‘असू आम्ही गृहस्थाश्रमी
स्वप्न वसे अंतर्यामी
यत्न चालू असे जंगी
नानास भावंड व्हेवे’ (Alekar; 1999: 11)

expose his desire of the life.

Many Absurd characters in this Theatrical tradition have confusing desires. The characters of both the plays have also confused desires. Hamm wants an end of all the futile action and at the same time he hesitates about the end. Bhaurao knows the futility of the religious rituals. In his dialogues he criticizes all these rituals and at the same time wants them.

In *Endgame* Beckett uses the symbol of the chess to resemble life. Through the title, he denotes the similarity between the final steps of the Chess and the futile activity of human life. He compares the futile action of ending the game in the last steps of Chess where the end is already declared, with that of human life. Through the title he suggests the human action as futile. In human life the end is already decided by death. In Chess, the loser comes to know the end of the game. What is left, for him at the end, are futile actions to complete the game. Hamm, Clov and other two characters lead towards the final destination. The actions they lead are futile. Similar sense is conveyed through *Mhanirvan*. After death, Bhaurao realizes the absurdity of human life.

In *Endgame*, characters proceed towards the end whereas in *Mhanirvan* Bhaurao is dead. But both the plays suggest that the approaching of death makes a human being realize his own life as absurd. The actions depicted in *Endgame* are ritualistic, cyclical and absurd. In *Mhanirvan* too, the actions are depicted as ritualistic and meaningless. The tone of the language used in *Mhanirvan* is appropriate to the occasion. Thus, both the plays reveal the futility of human action and the absurdity of existence.

Through the actions and plot of the play, Beckett wants to underscore the emptiness of the social value and traditional beliefs. He comments on the contradictions between assumptions human beings have and the way they behave in actual life, particularly on the serious occasion like 'death'. He exposes how the social and cultural values are striped down when death approaches. The actions such as, eating, sleeping, conversation, and love

making, depict the ordinary life of human being, under the shadow of death. By depicting ordinary actions, he intends to suggest the futility of life. In *Mhanirvan* Alekar depicts the ordinary event on the stage and reveals the absurdity of it. He underscores the traditional values and beliefs and shows them as futile in the face of death.

In both the plays, the playwright reflects the absurd motivations of human life. In Beckett's *Endgame*, there is nothing left to be motivated at or to be inspired by, for the sake of compassion. They are immobilized and crippled, Clov cannot sit, Hamm cannot stand and Nagg and Nell cannot live without ashbins, but even then they hesitate the end and love life. Their hesitation towards the end reflects their absurd motivations.

In *Mhanirvan* all, the characters are busy with the funeral rituals, which seem to be absurd. Their actions suggest their absurd motivations. Bhaurao lives all his life under the illusion that his wife is very much companionate towards him. After the death, he realizes that his assumption was absurd. Ramma spends much of her life with Bhaurao but cherishes a desire for someone who is more handsome than her husband. By depicting the contrast between Ramma's desire and her action, the dramatist criticizes the ideals of married life. Thus, both the plays portray the contradiction between the ideals and hopes as against the forces that drive life always off, the shores of promises to be kept and the ambitions to be realized in actual life.

By depicting the characters Nagg and Nell Beckett represents the relationship between the married couples and reveals the absurdity of the

married life. In *Mahanirvan*, also Alekar through the character Bhaurao and Ramma the dramatist reveals the absurdity of marriage. Both these characters desire some one else and at the same time trapped in the bond of marriage.

In Absurd theatrical tradition, playwrights use nonsensical and irrelevant pieces of language and meaningless clichés to depict the meaninglessness of the life. In these plays the words appear to have lost their denotative functions. The language of the absurd theater uses the language that does not imply the traditional meaning.

The implication of language in the absurd theater is not to reveal the traditional meanings of the word but to highlight the absurdity of the human communication. In *Endgame*, Beckett uses the nonsensical language and repetitive syntax for communication. By exemplifying such nonsensical use of language, he presents the absurdity in human communication. In *Mahanirvan* too, Alekar uses language to suggest absurdity. His language reveals many layers of human psyche. In *Mahanirvan*, the dialogues are purposefully elliptical. Dialogues are purposefully meaningless wordplays. The action and language are mechanical or ritualistic. This mechanical quality reveals the comic and absurd aspects of the plays.

Despite the comical or nonsensical use of language, their language gains a musical quality. The dialogues from this theatrical tradition resemble with poetry. The dialogues and soliloquies in *Endgame* resemble the instrument in the musical performance. Hamm's dialogue, for instance,

Hamm: In my house. (*Pause. With prophetic relish.*)

One day you'll be blind like me. You'll be sitting here, a speck in the void, in the dark, forever, like me. (*Pause.*)

One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up... (Beckett 1999: 45)

reflects upon the musical quality of the language of this play. In *Mahanirvan* Alekar uses language with musical quality. The language used in this play is the language of the ancient poetic form Kirteen. He uses many poetic forms, like Kirteen, Bhavgeet, and the melodramatic songs from Marathi Cinema to represent the absurdity of human communication and parodies the form itself.

In *Endgame* Beckett uses the black comedy and combines the pathos with humor. The universal truth of death at the background reveals the shade of death on the stage, but the dialogues and the actions presented on the stage arouse laughter. In *Mahanirvan*, too the taboo subject like death is dramatized in the vein of a comedy. He arouses laughter through the actions and the use of language, but at the same time, it reveals the dark side of life.

Endgame depicts absurdity by dramatizing the static state of life. By parodying death as a universal reality, he demolishes the socio-cultural biases of human life. Beckett depicts human life without social and cultural values. This state represents the absurdity of life and it underscores the futility of these values. In *Mahanirvan* Alekar, dramatize the event of death

by dramatizing the situation. He also presents the absurdity of human existence and the futility of the religious rituals.

The rebel against the traditional values is one of the major characteristics of this theatrical tradition. In both these plays, the playwrights depict the rebel against the traditional values. They rebel not only against the traditional values of society and culture but against the conventions of theatrical performances as well.

Though the plays are similar to each other on various grounds, there are certain differences too. These differences are not in the theme of absurdity. They are pertaining to the rendering of this theme in the performing art. The differences are noted because of the different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the two playwrights. In both the plays, the playwrights depict their respective cultural and religious entities. Although these entities are from two distinguished cultures and religions, they resemble in the theme of Absurdity. In *Endgame*, Beckett concentrates on the absurdity of human condition without any social and cultural aspects. *Mahanirvan* also depicts the absurdity of the human condition but in the context of the Indian culture and society.

The total lack of the development of the plot of *Endgame* is suggestive of the static state of life. However, there is discontinuity in the plot of *Mahanirvan* with a gradual development. The play starts with the death of the protagonist Bhaurao and ends with the cremation of the body. *Endgame* is without any action and *Mahanirvan* is full with actions like dance, songs, and religious rituals reflecting the theme of absurdity.

European theater of the Absurd emerges from the disastrous background of the two World Wars. Many social and political events of the contemporary social scenario resulted in a chaos which was responsible to create a tremendous turbulence on European playwrights. Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is the product of the same period. Alekar never experienced disaster of the World Wars. But, however, he shares the similar absurd consciousness. The absurdity emerged in Beckett's play *Endgame* is the reaction of the social environment, it depicts the psychology of the contemporary society whereas *Mhanirvan* is the product of the philosophy of the author. Though, this play is also a reaction to the social and religious beliefs. Thus the absurdity emerges in *Endgame* is from the psychology of the period and the absurdity in *Mahanirvan* emerges out of the philosophy of the playwright.

Though, the play *Mahanirvan* is published much latter after the publication of *Endgame*. There is no imitation. *Mahanirvan* is an original play by Alekar that was inspired by many events in his life. In this connection Pushpa Bhave comments:

आधुनिक तरुण नाटककार पाश्चात्य रंगभूमीच्या अनुकरणाने आपल्या मातीशी विसंगत अशी नवता आपू बघतात, अशी नेहमी टीका होते. परंतु आळेकरांनी आजच्या अनुभवातूनच, मराठी वतावरणातून निर्माण झालेली विसंगती महानिर्वाण साख्या 'Dark Comedy' त व्यक्त केली आहे... 'महानिर्वाण' या नाटकात मृत्यूसाख्या रंगमंचावर निषिध्द मानल्या गेलेल्या विधीचे जे पाखंडी दर्शन घडवले आणि कीर्तनासाख्या

सश्रद्ध परंपरेशी त्याचा अन्वय जोडला तो विलक्षण होता... (Bhave, 1991: 78)

In short, the play *Mahanirvan* is the original product of the author. Many biographical and regional references make clear, that the *Mahanirvan* is the product of Marathi soil.

References:

1. Alekar, Satish, 1999. *Mahanirvan* (1974). Pune: Nilkantha Prakashan.
2. Beckett, Samuel, 1976. *Endgame* (1958). London: Grove Press.
3. Bhave, Pushpa 1991, p. 78, Pradkshina Khandas-2