

SAMUEL BECKETT'S REPRESENTATION OF BODY AND SOUL IN THE PHYSICAL FORM OF ESTRAGON AND VLADIMIR IN *WAITING FOR GODOT*

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S. Beckett's (1906-1989) *Waiting for Godot* (1952) has remained one of the popular texts and plays among critics and researchers since the first performance of it in Paris. They examined and studied this text from many angles. But as far as my reading and knowledge is concerned, nobody talked about the psychological reciprocal relation of the two main characters: Estragon and Vladimir. These two characters are two distinct physical entities, but at the psychological level, they are the splits of a single human being, at the mental and physical levels. In the Bollywood film, *Deewangee* (2002), Ajay Devgan has been shown with two personalities. In panic situations, he gets his personality changed. But in *waiting for Godot*, it is just reverse. Having combined the said characters, we will get a normal human being. For our better understanding, we will assume a name to this normal human being as Estramir (See footnote).

In this play Beckett has given all the physical torments and suffering to Estragon, while mental and emotional to Vladimir. Hence, we can say that Estragon represents the physical split and Vladimir the mental split of the assumed person, Estramir. We have a number of examples to strengthen our opinion. Beckett strictly limits Estragon to physical awareness. He cannot think, nor act of thinking. He never feels mentally tired, but physically; Whereas Beckett's Vladimir always thinks philosophically. He also plays at thinking. He, unlike Estragon, feels mentally tired, and does not suffer physically (except kidney disease).

When men are too happy or too sad, their physical reactions don't match with their thinking, and their physical bustles seem strange and/or absurd. S. Beckett, being an absurd

playwright tries to show the post-modern world in its depressed condition. So, Estramir is divided into Estragon and Vladimir to present the extreme effect of depression.

Throughout the play, we see Estragon engaged in trying to take off and put on his boots; While Vladimir is engaged in taking off his hat, peering in it and putting it on his head. These two extreme behaviors show the affinity of Estragon with body, and Vladimir with mind. Vladimir is the person who is aware of his own cog-like existence in the world, and says:” All my life I’ve tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven’t yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.” (page 60) But Estragon who represents the physical entity says, having failed taking off his boot, “Nothing to be done” (06) physically. The hat is used to wear on head, and head symbolizes mind/brain. The boot is used to wear in legs, and leg has nothing to do with thinking or mind.

The body of Estramir spends its night in ditch. It always gets beaten. It happens because the mind (Vladimir) has not been with its body. Had the mind been with the body, the body would not have been beaten or spent nights in the ditch. After getting beaten, Estragon blames the mind for not saving his body from beating, as one thinks about the action that makes one beaten.

Almost all the physical activities are given to Estragon that helps to consider him as the body part of the assumed characters, Estramir. His leg is swelled because of boot. He is beaten every night. Moreover, he gets a kick from Lucky and then weeps. He cries, “Oh the swine! (He pulls up the leg of his trousers). He’s cripple me! - - - (on one leg). I’ll never walk again.” (24, 25) But Vladimir, who is the mind of Estramir, is given almost all the hurts at heart. He is sympathetic for Estragon’s misfortune. He scorns Pozzo, a character in the play, for his bad treatment to Lucky, the slave character. When he has told about Lucky’s misbehavior with Pozzo and rebukes Lucky. At the end of play he muses philosophically. He thinks loudly, “Tomorrow when I wake, or think I do what shall I say of today? - - - at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?”(67)

Wherever is body, there is hunger. Throughout the play, Estragon feels hunger thrice. Once he is given bones by Pozzo. And twice he is given carrot by Vladimir. Mind never gets hungry like this; rather it helps body to get its food (carrot). We do not find Vladimir being hungry, but providing Estragon with carrots.

Body has nothing to do with memory and past. If it has any relation with past, it is the marks of wounds that are lefts on it. Estragon hardly remembers about his past. He says, “That’s the way I am. Either I forget immediately or never forget.” (45) He could remember the bones, the kick, and so. But he cannot recollect Pozzo and Lucky. He also does not identify the place; While Vladimir recognizes the place, persons, and also remembers the incidents from the past. He also thinks about his past, present and future life. Being mind (Soul), he thinks of salvation and the Bible. He remembered the salvation of a thief, a tale from the Bible. He feels the insignificance of the life. So he tries to search the meaning of his life in the biblical references. Estragon, the body, could remember only the pictures and maps

from the Holy book. He never thinks of salvation, but suicide. It is so, because body has nothing to do with salvation. It is mind (Soul) who strives for it. Estragon twice wishes to hang himself to the tree, and there is a passing reference of suicidal attempt in a river.

Body sleeps not the mind. Estragon is fatigued and then sleeps. We never see Vladimir while sleeping, rather it helps Estragon to sleep. But when Estragon (Body) sleeps and dreams a nightmare, Vladimir grows restless (as if mind affected by nightmare) and wakes the farmer up. When Estragon wants to tell the nightmare, Vladimir does not wish to listen to it. He thinks listening to the dream means thinking about bad things. So, it is better to forget it at all. At the same time, he comforts Estragon, as mind comforts its restless and weary body.

Another interesting and symbolic thing, to strengthen our view, is the wish to ask Lucky to dance or think. As above said, body has nothing to do with thinking, it remains engaged in physical activities such as limping, hiding, dancing and so on. When Pozzo wishes to do something for the tramps, Estragon thinks, "I'd rather he (Lucky) dance." (29) But Vladimir, being a mind-like, wished, "I'd like to hear him (Lucky) think." (29) However, in the second Act, he gets Lucky's hat and tries to think. He is the person, who always reminds Estragon about their waiting for Godot.

Honour and pride are abstract things that only a mind could understand them, not a body. Estragon is found begging for money and bones. But Vladimir suggests him not to beg since they (Estragon) are not beggars.

One cannot separate body from mind. They live together. In the absence of one, another has no value. So, Vladimir and Estragon always live with each other. Trance is an art. In trance one leaves his/her body. In such situations, a man can forget all the worldly sorrows and becomes happy. Vladimir at the beginning of second Act is alone. He is happy, because Estragon (Body) is not with him. He says "I missed you - - - and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a strange thing." (43)

There are still many instances to prove our view; such as, Vladimir's question to the body about the latter's happiness; Vladimir's use of abstract nouns to abuse Estragon, and the latter's use of concrete nouns to abuse the former. As mind controls body, Vladimir controls Estragon in the worst suicide situations. Therefore, Estragon represents the body of a person, to have simple understanding, of Estragon; while Vladimir represents mind (soul) of Estragon. This is the way that Beckett unconsciously split Estragon into two different aspects of a single person: body (Estragon) and soul/mind (Vladimir).

In a nut shell, Beckett unconsciously penned two distinct physical bodies; the lacking in one is made up by the qualities of another and vice versa. We have seen in the bollywood film, *Diwangee*, two different psychologies of single being. Here two bodies are made from a single personality, Estragon, the invented character. Out of the two physical bodies, one is exclusively rational, while another is exclusively physical. Estragon thinks less, acts more, while Vladimir thinks more and acts less. So, we can affirm that these two leading characters are the psychological and biological splits of the imaginary character, Estragon.

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