RECONFIGURING THE WAITING FOR GODOT: Explorations within some Paradigms of Hindu Philosophy
Author(s): Ranjan Ghosh
Published by: Editions Rodopi B.V.
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25781474
Accessed: 26-10-2015 17:52 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp
JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
RECONFIGURING THE WAITING FOR GODOT:
Explorations within some Paradigms of Hindu Philosophy

Ranjan Ghosh

The concept of ‘waiting’ in Godot is here brought into line with several paradigms from Indian philosophical thought. The relation of Godot with Vladimir and Estragon (the authentic reflexivities within the contingent situation, the values and ethics of the situational whole) are explored and possible new lines of inquiry are opened. Drawing on the complex philosophical tradition of Karma, Dharma, and the Indian value-system, this article relocates these issues in the very ‘act’ of waiting. The ‘waiting’ is, then, interpreted as being less absurd, less nihilistic, and more positive and authentic. Indeed, this article seeks to reorient our approach towards the ‘waiting’ for Godot.

Circumscribing Beckett’s Waiting for Godot and the philosophy of ‘waiting’ within several intriguing parameters of Hindu philosophy can be a challenging and a celebratory experience, not just because it unearths new interpretive spaces, but also for the critical temerity that this venture entails, given Beckett’s unendorsed association with Indian philosophical systems. Unlike Eliot or Arnold or Emerson or Thoreau, the authenticity of Beckett’s personal linkages with the complicated matrix of Indian philosophy is suspect. However, given the conceptual pliancy of the play, the provocation to offer philosophical re-constellations in line with Indian philosophical systems can hardly be ignored. This article sets out several epistemological strands of Hindu philosophy, such as the concept of Karma, Dharma, and the Indian value system, so as to offer a new perspective on ‘waiting’. The critique of ‘waiting’ concentrates on Hindu philosophical-metaphysical-ethical interpretations and tries to unearth a fresh dimension to the relational plexus between Godot, Vladimir and Estragon, which in a way, reorients our entire approach to the play itself.
In the light of Hindu philosophy, the Godot-denied world of the play can be categorized by pramada, alasya (passivity) and nidra (torpor) as mentioned in the Gita (XIV.8). It is a drugged state reeking with the ‘incomprehensibility’ (read, here, more of the Buddhist sense of the term) of the ‘real’ – a near misguided obstinacy. So the initial feeling for the situation in the play speaks of the tamasic state which is born of ignorance: it deludes. From a tamasic state, (apratishtham, lacking usual foundation and reciprocity, aparasparasambhutam) we find at a certain stage in the drama, a clearer conative perception in a rajasic state that is, however, void of the unity of existence. It lacks the deeper insight into the unifying factor that Godot’s anticipative presence purports to bring to the surface. It is Karma, samsara, and then the inevitable bandha (domain of bondage) that constitute the fundamental existential matrix of Vladimir and Estragon. But what I propose here is that, when drawn into relation with certain paradigms of Hindu philosophy Beckett’s work does not just foreground an incessant undertow of non-knowledge, nescience or avidya but also (through the diligent, at times distracted, anticipation of Godot), a possibility for ‘discriminative knowledge’ figuring the ways of release (moksha-sadhana).¹ It needs to be understood that, in Hindu philosophy, ‘waiting’ is the unity of existence, the inspiration to reorient the undertow of moral slackness and other entropic forces. Following such premises, the ‘waiting’, as conative persistence (dhrti) can have as consequence a ‘consummation’ that provides a clear understanding of the self and its relation to the situation – a state of being-free from the morbid transition of matter. So a positive liberty is underlined where self-determination can adjudge the possibilities for self-transcendence (there is clear evidence of this in the play which we shall turn to later).

The ‘inauthentic’ milieu in the ‘waiting’ brings us to the concept of the Adhyasa in Advaita philosophy. Steeped in avidya (loosely translated as ignorance), the world of Vladimir and Estragon becomes a state of consciousness (I am referring here to the philosophical ramifications of one of the three stages of existence within this particular paradigm of Hindu philosophy) where realizing Godot would be realizing Brahman, the ultimate reality under Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracarya. Adhyasa is brought by Maya (it is the power that creates delusion: mas ca mohartha-vacanah yas ca prapana-vacakah/tam prapayati ya nityam, sa maya parikirtita – Brahma-vaivarta Pu-

³⁰⁸
Dasein, XXVII): Maya is Avarana (concealment) and Viksepa (superimposition). Maya in the Vladimir-Estragon world springs from ‘inauthenticity’ and gives rise to Aviveka (indiscrimination) and this leads to abhimana (attachment: in the play it is the repetitive atmospheric stupor) to Ragadvesadi, to Karma, to embodiment, and finally to misery. It is this misery that forbids the Kierkegaardian leap into enthusiasm and thus promotes a dichotomized entity in reading Godot. It is worthwhile to note that the interpretations arrived at within this as well as other paradigms of Hindu philosophy cannot be conclusive, because the pregnant conceptual ‘fluidity’ of the play enables a plurivocity of philosophical interventions.

However, the problems of inauthentic modes of existence can be seen to revolve around the Mimamsa philosophy of holding the individual to be morally responsible for his actions. This is not the concept of Karma as found in the Nyaya-Vaisesika system or Buddhist philosophy; it is, rather, the judgmental axis of ‘performance’ (a potent word for my argument) of the Mimamsa. So here we have vidhi (injunctions, one part of the performance) which means one has to wait for Godot and Nisedha (prohibitions, another part of the performance complex) which implies that one cannot move away but simply wait (waiting as performance) for Godot. The Karma of waiting (to be read in conflation with Heideggerean anticipation) has for me a truth of the scriptural world; the karma-vipaka or fruition of action is in waiting for the moment that decides the arrival of Godot. The philosophy of Avidya might interpret the situation to be noumenally false yet it is not simply a nonentity or a purely subjective experience for it is here, within it (read positive inauthenticity/avidya) that the struggle is actuated, the karmic process to realize the dharma of Godot’s Dasein. The Godot-awaited world is the product of avidya which is a kind of non-discriminative knowledge where jivatman (the individual self) is caught in sansara or transmigratory existence.² Godot, understood in this way, is the ultimate form of cognition, the Brahmanic state where jivatman is exempted from avidya (cf. Spinoza’s amor dei). It is avidya (which, for me, can be equated with positive inauthenticity) that inspires the momentum for salvation or salvaging the ultimate Dharma. With some effort the inauthentic, adharmic state of being can be interrogated when anticipating the future (Vorlaufen) is privileged over mere waiting (Erwarten).
Under the Sankhya system, we know that no action can take place unless there is a decision to act. The arrival of the boy bearing a message from Godot is a stimulation to initiate, or rather manifest, ‘action’.

Vladimir: It’s starting that’s difficult
Estragon: You can start from anything.
Vladimir: Yes, but you have to decide.

(63, my italics)

Without fatalistically waiting for the future to draw near, Vladimir understands the difficulty of starting amidst avidya and the evolution of a situation that makes for karmic flexibility. Godot and the duo of Vladimir and Estragon range in the scale of Hindu philosophy between monism, perfection and being eternal (Godot) contrasted with pluralism, incompleteness and transience (the duo). The hesitant inability to offer a rejoinder to Godot’s ‘deferred’ visit – ‘Tell him… (he hesitates)… tell him you saw us (pauses). You did see us, didn’t you?’ (52) – underwrites an incompetence in their conduct of temporal/circumstantial affairs which precludes the essential means to a spiritual realization in Godot. Godot within the value-system of Hindu ethics is integrated consciousness. Vladimir and Estragon cannot respond to this naked condition of pure selfhood because acting in the realm of dichotomous being they fail to achieve an integrated personality. However, the rajasic state of affairs puts the creation of their personality in train (several incidents in the play such as the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky point to it); it is a state that preludes a condition of ‘recuperation’. Godot has the potential to reveal an order of being which, more than being merely human, is a spiritual reality which is also the source of the significance of what happens in the temporal order of being. But importantly, despite the hesitant rejoinder to the boy, the message they wish to communicate concerns the persistent act of ‘waiting’. They have not left their ground despite Godot’s absence. Hindu ethics would suggest that the waiting needs to go on because one needs to figure the relation between the ‘ground’ and the ‘consequent’.

The situation of Vladimir and Estragon cannot carry its own final meaning: avidya springs from the acceptance of this world as final and conclusive. Wherever the result of action may lie, whether in the
action itself or in the agent, or somewhere else, it becomes obvious that it has been generated in the course of the ‘performance’. Vladimir thinks of change, desires reconfiguration, contemplates a ‘performance’ and thereby lends the power of contingency to their predicament. Vladimir says, ‘Let us do something while we have the chance…. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late!’ (79). This ‘performative’ potency insinuates the finality achieved in/through Godot, the karma-vipaka. In the theory of Prabhakara, Godot could be the Niyoga; it is the incentive to prompt the Apurva to realize the dharma of authenticity. Kumarila’s theory of Karma would attribute the seeds of actions to Vladimir’s contemplative, though intermittent, vitality. Beckett’s passive depiction of Estragon is deliberate: the dynamic sparks flying from the dramatic situatedness of Vladimir point to a realizable finality within the philosophy of karma (‘Vladimir: But it’s the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living.’ 60, my italics). So, the Karmic potentialities in ‘waiting’ need to be carefully considered. ‘Waiting’ promotes struggle and action reaches outward and inward at the same time. Hindu philosophy would choose to believe that more than being an outward manifestation it should be a soul-opening inwardization (do not Vladimir and Estragon realize the need for fellow feeling, sentiment and moral reflexivity in their interaction with Pozzo and Lucky?), a subjective pathos, that bludgeons through avidya to reach the state of liberation which I would qualify as the yukta-biyukta dasa (the bonded-liberated state). I would prefer to look at Godot as the ‘true self’ and waiting as an act of ‘desiring’. Meeting Godot would be realizing Godot which is the ideal of atmaprapti or atmalabha. For me there is inherently a substantial integration to the Godot-being (yukta). Vladimir and Estragon cannot go for they have to wait for Godot; they cannot hang themselves because Godot could be arriving anytime; their indecisiveness is not existential enigma but the yukta-biyukta dasa which is integral to the Godot-being within the Indian concept of values. That they cannot hang themselves does not point to any pointlessness of stigmatized existence but to an underlying prospect of a ‘becoming’ where values wait to be sublated through the intervention of karma and jnana (the biyukta dasa).

Within the existential milieu of the whole act of ‘waiting’, the three entities – Godot (for the sake of my argument here I would prefer to read Godot as Brahman), the individual souls, and the world –
share a *relationship*, according to the theory of Madhava Vedanta, to an extent. Godot is not completely independent (not to forget the ‘partnership’ principle which we shall discuss later) and the other two are not wholly dependent either. As the light of the sun is reflected through a rainbow, similarly the light of Godot in the form of consciousness is reflected through the individual souls of Vladimir and Estragon. But there must be a certain incompleteness and incompetency in the ‘reflection’ that denies the ‘usherance’ of Godot even for the second time; this incompetency springs from the *avidya: avidyayam bahudha vartamana vayam krtartha ity abhimanyanti balah*.

Following Madhava’s theory the ‘will’ of Godot (implied, inherent, immanent) essentializes the bondage so that the only way to overcome such a predicament is to comprehend the true nature of the ‘bondage’ – the dynamics of the Godot-Vladimir-Estragon partnership, the subtle matrix of the *yukta-biyukta* dasa. What Godot’s intimation through the boy and the possibilities of ‘homecoming’ suggest is that the knowledge of the true nature of the self in its relation with Brahman-Godot is incomplete. It is the lack of *aparoksa jnana*.

Within the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* system, *adrsta*, which is the unseen potency, is an unintelligible principle and Vladimir and Estragon cannot lay claim to any absolute knowledge of *adrsta*. However, they might accept it as *adrsta*, which in the context of my argument is not correct, as I have argued that the repetitiveness and lassitude they experience are born from *avidya*. Within the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* system, the unfolding dynamics of the play, despite the prevalent *avidya*, would encourage the luminous presence of Godot; hence the mandatory ‘waiting’. It is Godot who bears upon their consciousness, the constituent atoms of their being. So in *Nyaya*, Godot is the *Karma-hyaksa*, the *Phaladate* (moral governor). We presume that Karma in the Vladimir-Estragon world can be exercises in efficient causality but not without the actuation of Godot. It is Godot’s karma that establishes the Dharma both at the micro and the macrocosmic level in the Vladimir-Estragon existential circuit. So Godot can be interpreted as an efficient cause. But under the theory of the *Sahakarivada* of the *Naiyayikas*, Godot’s causal efficiency needs to take into account what Vladimir’s and Estragon’s ‘being’ and ‘actions’ deserve.

Vladimir: Let’s wait and see what he says.
Estragon: Good idea.
Vladimir: Let’s *wait till we know exactly how we stand.*
Estragon: On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes.
Vladimir: I’m curious to hear *what he has to offer.* Then we’ll take it or leave it.

(18, my italics)

So in a way, Godot exists because Vladimir and Estragon wait; Godot stands to be realized because of the Karmic self-reflexivities of the two. So the possibilities of Godot’s ‘being revealed’ are ingrained in the givenness of Karmic potency, the whatness of things.

Hindu ethical philosophy would argue that ‘waiting’ in its steadfastness then becomes the functioning unity of the personality that is realised when thought ripens to judgment through value-choices. Vladimir assesses the situation appropriately when he stresses the need to know exactly how they stand. It is a critique of the relation he has with the ground and the consequent. Within the philosophy of Karma, waiting, then, calls for an intensely self-critical awareness where the functional and intentional capacities available to Vladimir (there are selective instances in the play where he thinks of a ‘struggle’, stressing on the ‘way’ to ‘do’ it and stating: ‘we’re inexhaustible’ 62) demand the responsibility of exercising them. Within such tenets of Hindu philosophy reaching for/at Godot would mean a combination or synthesis of *jnana* and *karma* under the theory of *samuccaya*. So, if efforts are directed at the karmic honesty of the situation, we can have conditions suitable for the revelation of knowledge (Godot). The ‘inexhaustibility’ reminds me of what Krishna tells Arjuna on the eve of the *Kurukshetra*.

If filled with pride, you say, I will not fight
it is all in vain you are foolish.
Fight you will, your nature will make you fight.
Your karma will make you fight.
You are foolish. You will fight in spite of yourself
Doesn’t the world revolve like the magic wheel?
Isn’t Brahman the hub?

(Lal 1965, 110-11)

The question here is: Isn’t Godot the hub? According to the Bhartṛprapana, *karma* is essential to the process of Brahman-
realisation. Godot’s implicit ‘you ought’ awaits the right response of ‘I ought’. Volitionally, Vladimir needs to set in place an attitude of standing firm among the unceasing flux of becoming, an attitude which acts like the formation of a centre of gravity in a cosmic nebula. He understands the need to ‘wait’ – ‘Let’s wait and see what he says’ (18); he grows curious to learn what Godot is capable of delivering. His karma will make him fight.

Vladimir and Estragon, for me, are one self with two faces. Despite the words of separation exchanged between them the bond remains firmly in place, with a clear stress on a unity of existence which I qualify as the common act of waiting. This indirectly promotes Godot’s dharma that underscores this unity of existence. So within this status and as part of the intentional and functional capacities mentioned above, we have in Vladimir and Estragon the urge to interrelate with ‘others’ (Pozzo, Lucky and the world) and an impetus to conduct oneself with knowledge that imbues the social ethics of dharma. Clearly it is Vladimir who sees the positive inauthenticity of the situation, sallies at the dharma of being, while most often Estragon questions Vladimir as an extension of negativity. So the problem of apparent irreconcilability – the incessant dialectic between the Godot-hoped-for and the Godot-denied world – stimulates the they-He relationship. The relational schema is potentially intriguing. This intriguing status in the relationship is typical of the correspondence between the Brahman and the world within Upanishadic philosophy. It is a relationship that cannot be logically articulated. It must be admitted that both the characters as ensouled individualities are not the whole of this larger whole (Godot); they cannot be exhaustively identified with the focus of their awareness of the whole. They are a collection of experiences and memories and it is only by probing into the meaning of their life-experiences, which is the prevalent avidya that forbids discriminative knowledge, that they can become aware of the whole. Karmic dynamism is again a case in point. Here in the regnant Rajasic state of the play, dharma stands to be ‘possessed’. ‘Waiting’, thus, is to be in Godot, the participatory experience in ‘New Being’. So ‘waiting’ accentuates svabhava within the functional ramifications of dharma. Svabhava is self becoming – a self-piloted growth to the ontological verity of contentment in Godot. Vladimir maintains that they need to represent themselves worthily for they have not exhausted themselves yet (‘we are inexhaustible’ 62). The instrumentalities of
the dharma of Dasein inspires the svabhava, the being-in-the-world. In the action of the modes (rajasic being the predominant) the dynamics of intentionality (‘Let’s do something while we have the chance…’ 79) provide a point d’ appui, a leverage point that promises experiential self-transcendence. The ground of the great Godot-world is not a near insentient Brahman, but an intentionality, a will. Vladimir and Estragon need to know that they are mounted on a machine (yantrarudha, Gita XVIII.61). The svabhava for the situation turns Vladimir into a yagarudha with a skill in action that discriminates what is of moment to the spirit from what is not (‘…Then we’ll take it or leave it.’ 18). The poignancy of Zarathustra – ‘this is my way where is yours’ – makes us remember Vladimir’s assertion: ‘Vladimir be reasonable, you haven’t yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle’ (9, my italics). With the word ‘struggle’ in mind, the complexity evolving out of the karma-vikarma-akarma matrix in the Vladimir-Estragon world is, to an extent, owing to the potent question in Gita ‘What is action?’ In fact Gita states that, the way of work is deeply hidden, with the stress on ‘skill in action’ (karmasu kausalan) which means the skill in discriminating what is of moment to the spirit from what is not. This karmasu kausalan can emanate from the attitude that decides to wait and figure out where exactly they stand. This understanding would open before them the great design of Godot, the consequence of which would be no deferral of arrival; tomorrow would appear in the present.

Within the context of the discussion so far, it would be improper to interpret Godot as demanding a fettered allegiance to an ideology. Rather by not choosing to reveal itself, Godot indirectly instructs a probing into the realities of enacted being attesting itself in action. Akarma has it that not to choose to act is to choose not to act. This forbids any transition from the being of ‘human reality’ to the ‘being free’. The conclusion – I think therefore I am – becomes inadequate and has to shift to the position ‘I choose and therefore and thereby I am, opto ergo sum’. Pointing to the distinction between en soi and pour soi, Hindu philosophy would propose an insightful accounting for the field of ‘choice’ and ‘praxis’, inspiring in Vladimir and Estragon a steady enlargement of the repertory of its efficacies and the radius of its revolutionary awareness.4

What forbids authenticity of existence is the lack of realization of what Kant would call the ‘hidden plan’ (19). The underlying thrust
of the play is to make Vladimir and Estragon exercise and develop their capacities or else perish in ‘thrownness’. Hindu ethical philosophy would not consider this temporal ‘waiting’ as negative and meaningless. We cannot reject becoming: the order in becoming points to a being behind the becoming. One cannot overlook being-needs. History, here, in the Vladimir-Estragon world of Godot is founded on a true ontological principle that has its beginning and fulfillment in the depths of the ultimate experience (Godot). Here historical process, with the power to engage in deep communion with the finality of experience, can be realized in a profound sense in ‘partnership’ where possibilities are raised for a reconfiguration of the inauthentic situation. It is like Arjuna’s deeply distracted state before the war – indecisiveness and purposive inaction – which required Krishna as the ‘force’ to the ‘hidden plan’ to change his course. Godot has a forceful though implicit presence that promotes tropism towards values that tends to probe the dead level of energy in existence. The necessity of ‘waiting’ in existence can graduate to a necessity of freedom/individuality. It thus raises the possibility for a graduation to a stage that should dissolve any confusion between the contingent and the absolute. One which would overcome the benumbed state arising out of a misappropriation of finitude. Godot almost like an incarnated state (Sambhavami yuge yuge) waits upon Vladimir and Estragon’s realization of the need to right the course of history that drifts beyond man’s possibilities of evolutionary and experiential transcendence.

As Krishna is to Arjuna (referring to Bhagavad Gita again), so is Godot to Vladimir and Estragon. In the battlefield just before zero hour, Krishna reveals his cosmic form, reveals himself to be immeasurably great. But then does Arjuna become a mere marionette in the hands of the deity who forecloses Arjuna’s freedom and responsibility? Rather, Krishna leaves Arjuna to form his own authentic modes of reflection and action (yathe chhasi tatha karu). Correspondingly, Godot’s overpowering stature reveals itself when the boy arrives with the news that Godot shall come tomorrow. What must be noted is that the ‘waiting’ for tomorrow is that which Godot indirectly provides as the site for independent action (‘Vladimir: I’m curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we’ll take it or leave it’, 18, my italics). It provides a vectoral thrust toward maturation within becoming – a dharmic and karmic entelechy from externality to inwardness and from particularity to universality (‘Estragon: what do you expect, you always wait till
the last moment.’ 10). Again the karma of waiting in the dharma of the Godot-world is clearly emphasized. The Gita’s profound principle that God has a programme which needs the *partnership* of man in order to be fulfilled is quite evident here. The objective substantiation of Godot’s rightness or dharma of design (‘hidden plan’) inheres in the consciousness and intentionality of Vladimir and Estragon as they try to align themselves with such purposes as might reformulate their current state of being. So mere ‘waiting’ has to change to ‘active waiting’ that calls for a ‘partnership’ (‘Estragon: All my life I’ve compared myself to him,’ 52) where Godot’s impact, which lacks the transactional nature of a two-way process, would not allow the existential spiritual program to bear fruit. We need Vladimir’s ‘struggle’ – ‘the way of doing it’. Circumstantial awareness can mature into a realization that deepens one’s being using one’s own resources of causal initiative. The dead energy in the play, to which all are in thrall, is not Godot’s doing but a betrayal of the partnership undertaken on behalf of man (as Vladimir observes perceptively: ‘There’s man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet.’ 11). It is a misappropriation of the essential correspondence among – *Karta-adhishthanam karana-chestha-daivam*.

Knowledge of the *vyakta* (‘what is manifest’, here, positive inauthenticity) is essential to a realization of the *moksha* (it resonates in several places in the play, for example: ‘we will be saved’, or ‘we shall have mercy’, or Godot shall arrive with ‘reinforcements’ 77). The dramatic milieu foreground the dialectic with the *avyakta* (‘what is unmanifest’, the ‘hidden plan’ in waiting) – the perishable and the caused conflated with the manifold, the emergent and the all pervading. In fact ‘waiting’, inveterate anticipation, ascertains and appends ‘value’ to reality where the totality of reality is realized in the maturity of the ‘partnership’. Godot’s values are not *karmasadhya*; they are intrinsic and absolute beyond the scope of human agency (Singh 1949, 84). So it is pointless to believe in the pointlessness of existence in the Godot-delayed-denied-deferred universe of man. Its basic resistance to analysis defies all categorized hermeneutics of self. For me, its silence revels in interpretation: ‘waiting’, non-appearance calculates the modes of appearance. At most, a kind of ‘self-realization’ is hinted at by Beckett where more than ‘voidness’, it is self-identity with the existent; it is a striving towards attainment of identification with the ultimate (Godot). Vladimir, thus, admits that they are ‘inexhaustible’. Within Ramanuja’s concept of *moksha*, the self, having an

317
intuition of the supreme self (Godot), is a conscious self persisting in the state of release.

Vladimir: Tied.
Estragon: Ti-ed.
Vladimir: But to whom by whom?
Estragon: To you man.
Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an idea!
(20-1)

It is a liberating ‘idea’ to be tied to Godot. So the effort to ‘struggle’, to maintain – ‘Let us do something, while we have the chance [...] Let us make the most of it, before it is too late!’ – is the restoration of a ‘natural position’ (Ramanuja’s idea of liberation), a preservation of the self’s distinctive essence through being identified with Godot. And within both Sankara and Ramanuja’s premises we can argue for the possibility of a restoration to a state of harmony (a Godot-owned-embodied state) through karman.

So what I term a Godot-liberated status is a positive state of consciousness, not a bare existence afflicted by desolate materiality and soul-sultifying inertia. It should be a freedom that makes a claim on value and puts a premium on knowledge that affects, influences and purifies being. Within the formative matrix of the play there is a clear change in the trajectory of knowledge, especially for Vladimir, and in the knowledge content which is implicit in the play. For instance, the insistent enquiry, ‘will night never come’ (for with night-fall the prospect of Godot’s arriving on the next morning intensifies) and Pozzo’s affirmation that he would have waited for Godot till it was black night, point to changes in process that border on Karmic and the Dharmic entelechy as mentioned above. Estragon’s Adam-like stature confirms a ‘struggle’ and Pozzo’s call to be a ‘little more attentive’ (37) reinforces greater involvement with self-reconstruction. However, Karma, is a more significant paradigm and Beckett seems to put greater emphasis on karma than knowledge. Reorienting, then, the concept of dharma, as traditionally propounded, intimations of Godot and its consequences for the inmates of the Godot-world make us believe in interrelatedness (the ‘partnership’ as I have argued), implicating a possibility for ‘growth’. The dharma, as implied through the Godot world, is a philosophical reinterpretation of the temporal
schema. Dharma, for Beckett, would propose a valued order which more than a specific order of life is ‘thoughtful’ orderliness.

Godot, thus, within several traditions of Hindu philosophical thought defies law; the uncertainty concerning Godot is a reevaluation of the Hindu view of the temporality and materiality of existence. The dharma in ‘waiting’ would never discount the samsara or Vladimir and Estragon’s circumstantial immediacy. The ethical perfection waiting to be actualized (the pluripotency in the ‘waiting’) is the condition which precedes the achievement of a liberation through karman which does away with the sacred-secular dichotomy (‘All my life I have compared myself to him’ 52). Karman would brighten the possibilities of being identified with Godot and the dharma of ‘waiting’ foregrounds the ‘partnership’ that decimates this dichotomy. In the event of this realization in ‘waiting’, the situation, conceptually, leads us to a site where dharma and moksha can intertwine, the ethical and the spiritual can enmesh. The intermeshing is graded: in the ‘inter-active’ situation involving Vladimir and Estragon the values in the lower rung of the Indian value system are put on trial and are sublimated and transformed in the light of the ‘waiting’ for Godot (in the context of the play one can find such values in the hesitancy of Vladimir and Estragon to formulate a response to Godot’s prospective visit, the material desire that terminates in physical comfort, the impatience to see the end of a thing or phenomenon, blindness to the underlying value of their existential reality etc.). So, following the graded systems of value of Hindu philosophy, Godot has intrinsic value whereas the rest of the values are instrumental.

In line with my thesis, then, I would refuse to read the play as predominantly ‘absurdist’ because ends can be ascribed to most of the actions (each action, if not formally, intrinsically outlines the ‘waiting’ for the ultimate experience) and most of the consequences are meaningful and symbolically fruitful. The frustration and resistance involved in the temporal situation of Vladimir and Estragon is integral to the very ontology and teleology of the ‘waiting’. The message contained in the ‘waiting’ concerns a correspondence between matter (individuality and action) and Brahman (the Godot-liberated or Godot-possessed state) with stress being laid on a new degree of ethical activism. Thus, with the right kind of realization of the dharma of the existential situation one would be assured of reaching the gateway to moksha. Vladimir and Estragon need to understand that the moral
ethos of the ‘given’ in their existential circuit is not the absurd realm, which is self-sufficient and self-complete. One has to go beyond the ethics of the situation to reach the state of being free where, in the complete experience of spiritual freedom, all contradictions will be resolved. Nothing would then remain uncertain thereby negating Estragon’s assertion: ‘No, nothing is certain’ (53). The re-imagined state of ‘waiting’, will have Godot as the finale, the all sufficing human good, and, following the philosophy of authenticity, Godot is ‘seduction’ and ‘enticement’.5

Notes

1. I have chosen to interpret this ‘everydayness’ in ‘waiting’ in the light of positive inauthenticity which would mean evoking the ‘guilt’ in the ‘givenness’. In Heideggerean terms Godot could be the ‘caller’. I suggest a provocative correspondence between ‘discriminative knowledge’ in Hindu philosophy and the authentic-inauthentic binarism in modern European philosophy. Premised within this dialectic, the ‘waiting’ would signal Godot’s dharma or authenticity as something yet to be realized and the moment of Umkehr as a delayed phenomenon.

2. See, Sankara-Bhasya on the Brahma-sutra 1.IV.3. Accepting the situation ‘finally’ as absurd, fraught with a dead level of energy, is another version of avidya. It falsifies the truth of the being. There is no harm in accepting the multiplicity of the world; but to look at it as ‘final’ and ‘fundamental’, as a self-existing cosmos, would be tantamount to a misappropriation of finitude. Chandogya Upanishad or the Prasna Upanishad pontificates about overcoming the avidya of the situation for a proper state of becoming.

3. Mundaka Upanishad (1.2.8). Radhakrishnan translates it as: the immature, living manifoldly in ignorance, thinking we have accomplished our aim.

4. When Hindu philosophical ethics can be used to configure a dynamic potential in the situation of the play, I would place the dynamics of Karma in the vestibule between Sanchita Karma and Agami-Karma. In Agami-Karma we can propose a greater possibility of Karmic control, futurity and greater degree of consequen-
tiality. The Godot-world emphasizes that action will have effects with respect to the Godot-law and the Godot-order.

5. Nietzsche claims that the wine of absurdity and the bread of indifference cannot thwart authenticity and a star is only born from chaos. If any possibility of authenticity exists, it is in the ‘affirmation’. The affirmative thrust in the anticipation of their waiting would promote the values that could initiate authenticity. Godot’s dharma lies in stretching the ‘waiting’; waiting with no result is an authentic ploy to make them answerable to the responsibilities of existence. This weighs the ‘positive’ element of waiting; this is the moment of their ‘enticement’.

Works Cited