

The Reality of Absurdity as Reflected in Sayeed Ahmad's *Milepost*

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Abstract: *The paper attempts to analyze the absurd play Milepost (1976) of Sayeed Ahmad who was writing about 'helplessness', 'human frustration', 'uncertainties', and about the indifference of 'all powerful Nature', along with a note of 'hope and waiting'- all of which he makes us experience directly. This study is an attempt to shed some more light on Ahmad's plays, particularly on Milepost, since the researcher believes, there is still much work needed to be done on Ahmad's plays. It is a narrative research and follows descriptive-cum analytical method. The textual references are given as evidence to support the argument of this research. Some key concepts relating to 'Absurdity', 'Waiting and Hope' are discussed in relation to the text. Ahmad epitomizes absurdity as reality. Through the journey of the characters, we realize what the playwright intends us to realize. Milepost also focuses on how man is able to confront and survive against the hostility of surroundings and expose the real reality of absurdity of humanity. This play highlights the strength of the human spirit and ask the audience to reflect on their own lives. It helps us grasping the reality of absurdity and makes us realize that we can either accept the absurdity of life or fight against it as long as possible. It is found that the characters do not just struggle with absurdity, alienation; they struggle with the real reality of life they live in.*

Keywords: *Absurdity, Hope and waiting, Reality of absurdity, Real-reality*

1. Introduction

The association among Beckett, the theatre of the Absurd and Sayeed Ahmad is very close and many people fail to assign Sayeed Ahmed his right place in the history of Absurd play. Sayeed Ahmed is not only the unique absurdist but also an avant-garde dramatist of Bangladesh - "a man who experimented new ideas connecting our tradition and culture with the dramatic philosophies of the western world, and he did it with incredible

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craftsmanship and success. This was possible because he could involve himself perfectly into the latest developments of the world theatre. Sayeed Ahmed experimented—that too with remarkable success—writing absurd plays back in 1961, only six or seven years after Beckett had written his plays” (Selim, 2012). It should be highlighted, however, that it is not easy, for apprehending a western interpretation of life’s absurdity and meaninglessness and interpreting it in Bengali language and lifestyle with refinement, is no doubt a unique achievement on the part of Ahmad. Ahmad is inspired by both Beckett and Ionesco but he does not imitate like one under a spell, rather he uses his judgment and preference and blends the new form with the subject familiar to the audience.

2. The Theatre of the Absurd: Beckett and Sayeed Ahmad

Sayeed Ahmad (1931 – 2010), a modern, a versatile genius, is known as a playwright, first and foremost. He is an exceptional voice in the world of Absurd drama. Indeed, through his writings, the beginning of Bengali Absurd play has started its journey in Bangladesh as well as in the sub-continent. Though some of his renowned contemporaries’ like Syed Waliullah (1922-1971) and Munir Chowdhury (1924-1971), also have experimented and wrote some of their write ups following the essence of the Absurd style, the content and form of Sayeed Ahmad's plays are obviously absurd for the first time in Bengali literature. As Hasnat Abdul Hye, editor of Complete Works of Sayeed Ahmad, Vol II, mentions in the introduction of the book:

He is considered to be the pioneer modernist in this field in the sub-continent having written *The Thing*, the first play in the absurd vein, albeit modified by his own ideas. He had read Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot* and was almost swept off the ground by its avant-garde character and tone. Specially, he was head over heels reading the unconventional dialogue, the spare scenes and the puzzling endings. His first attempt to write a play following the trend set in by Beckett was not successful but he did not give up. His second attempt produced *The Thing*, arousing curiosity among readers and audience and piquing the interest of critics. The theme of the play was interwoven with folk rituals, traditional customs and natural disaster. Though the dialogue followed the absurd style, the actions of actors, events on the stage and the dramatic ending resonated with the audience (Ahmad, 2012, p. XIV).

Absurd is concerned with the ultimate realities of the human condition and problems and that it is “intent on making its audience aware of man’s precarious and mysterious position in the universe” (Esslin, 2004, p.402). This preoccupation with making the audience aware of man’s condition is a dominant characteristic both in Ahmad’s and Beckett’s plays. In *Waiting for Godot*, the playwright depicts the time where human suffering has reached the climax of its existence. Two tramps, two representatives of mankind are repeating the tiresome exercise of waiting for Godot without any change in routine. The characters seem to represent human destiny in a vague manner, of course with a note of hope for a change.

3. The Absurd Playwrights and the New Meaning of Life

The researcher believes that the absurd playwrights are looking for ways to discover the new meaning of life from the apparent inconsistency, meaninglessness and uncertainty of the world through their plays. In addition, it happens through the interaction of the play and audience – deep inside the audience’s minds. Distinguished dramatist Aatur Rahman opines that:

Theatre of the Absurd is a medium for searching the meaning of life of the fallen people in a courageous way. Absurd Theater tries to illustrate the anguish at the loss of certainty of life through a strange contradictory truth. Such play tries to answer subtle question regarding life of today's colorless world as well (Rahman, 1973, p.96).

On the other hand, the author of *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961; 2004), Martin Esslin believes that the dignity of man depends on his ability to face the senselessness and meaninglessness of their existence “to accept it freely, without fear, without illusions – and to laugh at it” (Esslin, 2004, P.429). The researcher believes the laughter Esslin and Beckett in his play *Happy Days* (1961), talk about has to do with acceptance. The laughter that might come out of our acceptance of the meaninglessness of our situation is painful and destructive, because it makes us see a reality we were trying to avoid looking at. It takes courage and strength to accept that actions are useless, as Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and Ahmad’s *The Thing* (1961) show us, “This is this, this is that, this is all (Ahmad, 2012, p.22).

We know, after watching and reading Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Ahmad was influenced “by its avant-garde character and tone. Specially, he was

head over heels reading the unconventional dialogue, the spare scenes and the puzzling endings. His first attempt to write a play following the trend set in by Beckett was not successful but he did not give up. His second attempt produced *The Thing*, arousing curiosity among readers and audience and piquing the interest of critics. The theme of the play was interwoven with folk rituals, traditional customs and natural disaster. Though the dialogue followed the absurd style, the actions of actors, events on the stage and the dramatic ending resonated with the audience” (Ahmad, 2012, p. XII). Novelty of his plays is unique and praiseworthy as Sayeed Ahmad has successfully blended the pastoral rituals and native context through western compactness in his plays. Thus, he enriches Bengali plays by following the absurd structure of the West, and without any doubt this new innovation is his own accomplishment.

4. Absurdity: A New Trend in Bengali Literature

Keeping distance from conformism and retaining intensive attention towards life and artistic claims, Ahmad has started a new trend in Bengali Literature. The three plays, *The Thing/ Kalbela* (1961), *Milepost* (1976) and *Survival /Thishnaya* (1976) - established him in the history of Bengali drama, as a successful and accomplished playwright. Not only on literary values but also in style, he is one of the pioneers of establishing new genre and elegance in Bengali stage drama. Through continuous curiosity and experimental works, he has introduced post-war European artistic thought, modern complex ideology and western dramatics in the theatre of the then East Bengal. Noted dramatist Bazlul Karim describes Ahmad as the pioneer in the introduction of Three Plays:

The evolution of the Existentialism and Absurd trend of Europe in 1950s is introduced for the first time in this region, almost in the same approach in 1962, by Sayeed Ahmad's play *The Thing*. From this point of view, this drama (*The Thing*) opens a new horizon of thought in this Eastern part of the world” (quoted in Ahmad, 1989).

The Milepost is the second play by Sayeed Ahmad which is written during 1962-1964 and published in 1976. This is a three act play with only three scenes. In this absurd play the object i.e. the milepost of the road in the highway becomes a symbolic central character like the absent character ‘Godot’ in

Waiting for Godot and the Thing/Cyclone in The Thing. The other characters of this play are: Watchman, Grave-digger, Postman, Clown, Big Brother, Little Brother and Mother. From the presence of its diverse characters, it can easily be grasped that this play would be a symbolic one. Its theme is famine, an issue acquainted to the people in the sub-continent. Through the dialogue of the Gravedigger and the Watchman, the unyielding cruelty of famine has been brought into sharp focus, but without expressing any sentiment or unnecessary emotion. The appearance of a mother with her two sons adds a twist to an accustomed catastrophe of famine because she has to make a challenging choice according to the dream she had, one of her sons has to be sacrificed but there was no hint in the dream about which one to offer. The dilemma in making an exact decision has been presented as the essence of the human predicament. As in this context, Sayeed Ahmad himself points out in the introduction of Milepost, "Famine is not only the powerlessness of the hungry, but also a crisis of the human soul (Ahmad, 1976, p.47). This play is written to express the truth, the reality - the strong screaming of the human soul's crisis as well.

The action in Milepost takes place somewhere in a famine-stricken public road from where people can come and go to any part of the country. The world surrounding them is alienated through its indifference. We see some alienated people involve themselves in conversation and different types of works, on the way, some of them are coming and going, and through their dialogues and interactions, the playwright portrays the pains and agony of mankind in general. The researcher believes that through Milepost, Ahmad (like other major absurd playwrights) expresses his most intimate visions about the fundamental philosophical question about the place of human being in his surrounding world and analyzes human soul. In a broader philosophical context, especially in existentialism and phenomenology, alienation describes the inadequacy of the human being in relation to the world where humankind became the slave of an uncaring and cruel world (Social Alienation, n.d.); and they have very little control over life. So, the researcher would illustrate the importance of the characters' apparent insignificant tasks and how there is so much besides their evident routine tasks. The study also makes people see the serious side of the characters of the absurd theatre, who through the absurdity of their existence, show the absurdity of life in general. Like the Waiting for Godot and The Thing, the motivation of accepting the reality is also an objective of this play.

At the beginning of the play there is a very meaningful hint of milepost. The street Watchman often changes the position of the direction of the milepost that indicating different destination pellets (name plates of different places). The researcher believes, it is practically a rebellion against certainty. The researcher agrees with the notable playwright Ataur Rahman when he says, "This milestone is a symbol of certainty. These certainties are developed at the different stages of time by the societies, countries, and civilizations so that we can feel secure in our lives. These guarantees are also rules generating from other rules. And, these are also rules (Ahmad, 1976, pp.50-51). We see, in the world of art there is a definite set of rules for practicing aesthetic guidelines and keeping discipline. The very term 'Absurd' implies something which is against the nature, rules, logic and succession – and something that are irrelevant and incompatible. Therefore, rejecting traditional rules, these traits are adopted as the norms of the Absurd plays. Accordingly, in Milepost, at the very beginning, the playwright allows the Watchman to change the direction of the Milepost. It implies the universal desire of human beings who would like to break the customs and the rules by going against the established rules. This highway, turns as a symbol of dynamic and ever-changing perspective of the ongoing life where the diversified people have come together. Yet, apparently, they have nowhere to go. Through the hopelessness and strange happenings, the individual discovers the truth and we may say the appellation of this truth is 'Absurd' and/or 'Existential'. And in the midst of it, there are Watchman, Grave-digger, Postman, Clown, Big Brother, Little Brother and Mother – each representing an abstract character who constantly rotates around the milestone at the backdrop of famine. Here, in this play, Ahmad depicts the ultimate misery and anguish of human life. Yet, deep inside their hearts there is expectation for a miraculous solution, or for a savior to come. Like the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, they keep waiting for someone or something who or what would save them from this uncertain and miserable condition. Their absurd condition illustrates the philosophical truth of why and when people break the established truth. They keep searching, waiting to find out who and what they are and keep going on. This 'waiting' and 'hope' are the basic human situation in the world. All his life man is waiting for something, which cannot bring any definite contentment to him, any definite peace like the condition of Sisyphus. He is waiting for happiness, not realizing that the greatest suffering consists in it. His nature is rooted in yearning and trying, which is an unquenchable thirst. However, waiting

represents impossible possibilities 'to going on' in our life. Hope is the most human of all emotional states because only through hope the man can recognize the infinite possibilities in the world.

That is why, when the religious zeal ends at the end of the play, discarding confusion they talk about the possibilities of golden future. The Watchman who keeps on changing arbitrarily the direction and the name plates of the milestone to suit his whim, eventually broke the neck of the milepost – the symbol of the cruel certainty as a protest against the regulation of life as well as the limitation of life.

And, on their way of this mysterious life, the playwright depicts the passion, outlook, destination, life, death with the dialogue and the action of the live-characters on the stage before us. Following the rules of the Absurd style, Milepost searches a deeper meaning- sometimes with sarcastic dialogue, sometimes moving randomly from one subject matter of interest to another one. HasanHafijur Rahman, in his essay "Sayeed Ahmad's Plays", sees the reality of life and complexity of the level of consciousness in this play as which, "There is no such absolute totality - an incredible figure in the universe, moving on only in the direction of life" (Rahman, 1975;1995, p.46). So, this reality is profound - diversified and insightful reality of human life. This play can also be described as a modern psycho-analytical play. Aaur Rahman, the Bengali translator of Milepost explains in the introduction of the play:

The theme of Sayeed Ahmad's plays is not foreign or universal. He writes about natural disasters like cyclone, famine etc., which are an integral part of life in Bangladesh. But his presentation and treatment of characters are not traditionally those of the East or of Bangladesh (Ahmad, 1976).

Sayeed Ahmad does not portray his motherland as a fertile woman rather as a devastated, subdued woman, who undergoes an unconscious lamentation deep inside her heart for her distressed children. The appearance of flood-famine-pestilence stricken country force the inhabitants to see the real mother figure breaking the idealistic views of a beautiful mother image of Bengal (Rahman, 1975, p.50). The playwright also narrates the strong power of the people of this soil who have the capability to cope up with the absurd

condition. Just because the characters of the plays or humans in general are enclosed and lost in pointless actions between birth and death, does not imply that, they/we exist without 'hope' and 'possibility'. Hope and possibility might be latent but not altogether hopeless. 'Waiting', 'wanting', and 'hoping' are parts of human life. It is found that in his plays, whatever the situation is, human being has the capability to go beyond the enclosed condition in the end and it is the real reality even in the midst of absurdity. 'Hope' in absurd plays symbolizes continuity of life. Ultimately, Ahmad's Milepost helps us grasp the reality of absurdity and make us realize that we can either accept the absurdity of life or fight against it as long as possible.

5. Absurdity and the Existential Crisis in Ahmad's Milepost

In this play, Sayeed Ahmad follows the traits of absurd plays completely in depicting the characters and in forming the dialogues. As a result, the Watchman, Grave-digger, Postman are not ordinary people rather they are people facing existential crisis in the complex modern world. From this point of view, the playwright does not just focus on the realistic destructive outcomes of famine, rather he epitomizes the abstract aspects of famine through sarcastic dialogues:

Grave-digger: But business is very brisk. The famine has come as a boon.

Watchman: Do you think it's going to be serious?

Grave-digger: The famine has an unquenchable thirst. Its hunger knows no bounds. Hundreds of villages have just turned into graveyards. Everyone is scared of the famine. They all seem to run. But the famine won't leave them. It has got a terrific speed. Only last night it was miles away. This morning it is nearly next door (Ahmad, 2012, p.56).

They know that there is no escape from such absurd condition since famine is knocking to their doors and the Grave-digger considers it as a blessing because the more people die the more will be his income:

Grave-digger: There is no way out than to endure whatever is taking place here.

Watchman: Life is difficult enough here, there, anywhere. Why make it worse? What's so funny about guessing? Guessing is all we can do. It's a fact

that at present I've only two friends on this highway. One having a bunch of letters meant for dead. Another who has laid the dead beneath this heavy earth. One has got addresses, the other doesn't even know their whereabouts. Both are interesting persons. Both are helpless (Ahmad, 2012, p.60).

This uncertainty and the helplessness –are common traits of absurd plays. We see the tragedy of mankind in the following conversation:

Big Brother: Mother, you can't go on distributing the little that we have. We don't know of the future until we reach the right village. Such riff should never be encouraged.

Mother: A few millions are already starving. But this one can't go away unfed from here. After all he is going to leave us soon. He is as important now as anyone of you. A mother can't see her son starve.

Postman: You can't feed the millions. Nor will this famine ever leave the soil. It has set its venomous teeth into our veins, injecting poison into our bloodstream

Clown: I suppose he's right. You can't do much by feeding me only once. I know I'll have to starve. It will turn into a habit. Then I shall have no pain.

Watchman: Pain or pleasure is immaterial on this soil. Our dear mother Bengal. Most probably by mistake she once smiled ages ago and from then on the gangrene started gnawing at her bones. That's the penalty. It has been eating into her bones for centuries. Now she is scared to laugh. Some serious tragedy will befall (Ahmad, 2012, p.67).

Helplessness is an integral part of their life and like the characters of *Waiting for Godot* they accept that absurd truth. They know, the cruelty of famine is insatiable as well:

Watchman: I'm sick and tired of this game. You've got to deliver these letters. They may be waiting.

Postman: My foot. To make them happy, I have been riding this bicycle since morning.

Watchman: I don't believe a word. You must have been enjoying a nap in the cool shade of a tree.

Postman: Believe me I could not find one soul alive. You understand, they are gone, migrated (Ahmad, 2012, p. 59).

Yes, people are gone and migrated to another world. Now, they have become only names on the envelopes. Such is life – all on a sudden everything vanishes. The characters are the representatives of all ‘mankind’, which in Lucky’s phrase, “is seen to waste and pine waste and pine” (Beckett, 1997, p.73). Incapable of changing the situation and doing any significant action, they portray the image of an utterly pessimistic view of man in general as a helpless victim of their ontological fate. King Oedipus, Macbeth, Hamlet - none can escape from this relentless fate. The situation, the suffering shared by all of them is exactly expressed by Macbeth towards the end of the play when he utters:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out; out, brief candle!
 Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player
 That sturts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
 Signifying nothing (Shakespeare, 1988).

6. ‘Absurdity’, ‘Waiting’ and ‘Hope’: A Catalyst for Realizing the Reality of Life

However, in Milepost , Ahmad depicts the strong mentality of the people of this soil who have the capability to cope up with the absurd conditions. Eminent critic and playwright Aaur Rahman, mentions in the introduction of the book The Milepost that the subjects of Sayeed Ahmad's plays revolve around familiar issues such as cyclone, turbulence or famine, but his method of presentation and the development (of the psyche) of the character are not customary in Bangladesh or oriental. The astonishing dialogue, the appeal of the judicious questions, the interaction of the characters are essentially the absurd genre of the Western world (Rahman, 1973, p. 50). In Milepost, the absurd style of fatigue-anarchy-unrest-disconnection-doubt-fatality-unhappiness are represented in an abstract way.

But what is unique here that the frustration leads to a positive glimpse of human effort towards optimism of life. This is an inevitable way of confusion and a lossless deviation journey. So, the pedestrians gather around the Milepost, with an expectation that something or someone like Godot or a powerful being would arrive to change the situation and/or extinguish the fires of famine through a miraculous cosmic solution. Here, we find a similarity between *Waiting for Godot* and *Milepost* – all characters are waiting and expecting a solution with a note of hope.

In this play, the concept of ‘Waiting’ and ‘Hope’ shows the themes of waiting and continuation too and indicate the emotion of hope through conditions of indeterminacy. While waiting, it seems ‘hope’ is their weapon for struggling against the absurd condition, frantically filling their time with words and conversations. As there is no other option, they remain where they are, invent stories, trying to construct a past that give them hope for the future. They accept the absurdity and revolt against the absurdity, as Camus also believes “accepting the absurdity of everything around us is one step, a necessary experience: it should not become a dead end. It arouses a revolt that can become fruitful. An analysis of the idea of revolt could help us to discover ideas capable of restoring a relative meaning to existence” (quoted in Popova, n.d.).

The Watchman, the Grave-digger, the Postman, the Mother and her children –they do not just remain real-life character here rather become a symbol of life’s philosophy and represent the traits of the modern mindset. On this characteristic of the absurd genre Aaur Rahman in the introduction of the book, comments:

The characters of the play demonstrate the harsh reality through sarcastic helplessness and incomprehensible dialogue with strict zeal. They move from one context to another from time to time before reaching the final boundary and, leaving the already developed context what is achieved through the difficult endeavor, and then, they move to the new context. Their hopes, disappointment, misery and troublesomeness represent the traits of the modern mindset (Quoted in Ahmad, 1976, p.50).

It is understood in the unprecedented form of dialogue and meaningfulness of their words. According to Watchman, highway is a place where everyone spends a part of their time in between coming and going:

Watchman: I can't say about anybody else, but this much is clear to me that you don't mean anything at all.

Grave-digger: Thanks very much for the kind consideration shown to my personality. I guess I can go home and stretch all over my bed and leave the world to itself.

Watchman: Who's talking of the world? I am a wretched highway Watchman.

Grave-digger: Well then think of the highway. Tell me, what do you think of the highway?

Watchman: The highway is a place where everyone spends a little time. Some way till the picnic is over, others simply speed along to the next destination.

Grave-digger: Have you ever tried to persuade anyone?

Watchman: It's so futile. You can't make a home on the highway.

Grave-digger: What's the use of such a highway?

Watchman: I'll tell you funny things. I've seen on the highway.

Grave-digger: Tell me all about it. I'm very keen to know.

Watchman: I have seen people laughing in the highway. I have seen people quarrelling on the highway. I have known people eating, dancing, flirting on the highway. I have seen black crows nibbling abandoned bodies on the highway.

Grave-digger: Is that all?

Watchman: No this is just the beginning. It's a nice fairy tale.

Grave-digger: *[Amused]* Tell me, you really saw people laughing on the highway?

Watchman: *[Laughing]* Why. Yes ...

Grave-digger: *[Laughing]* Are you sure?

Watchman: *[Laughing]* Oh yes, I can bet [...] (Ahmad, 2012, pp. 55-56).

7. Struggle with the Reality of Life by Accepting Absurd Reality

They are in a threshold-position from where there is no apparent escape, for each step can only lead further into the uncertain world. They keep fighting on taming the monster of defeat, despair and dejection by visualizing worlds

that are alternative to these realities and reflect philosophically that people can only stop the arrival but not the departure:

Grave-digger: Dear brother, only my profession is flourishing these days.

Watchman: You think you're really doing a great turn to all of us?

Grave-digger: I know only this much, you can stop the arrival, not the departure.

Grave-digger: In which one are you interested, the arrival or the departure?

Watchman: The time lag (Ahmad, 2012, pp. 55-56).

Using the religious story of sacrificing a son by Ibrahim, Sayeed Ahmad exposes the inner thoughts, dogmas and the subconscious minds of mankind through the character of Mother with the help of dream- symbol: "It is said that Ibrahim (AS) had a dream one night, in which Allah (SWT) told him to sacrifice Ismail, his beloved son. At first Ibrahim (AS) thought it was the devil playing tricks on him and he immediately disregarded it. However, the following night, the same dream occurred again commanding him to do the same. Ibrahim (AS) then came to realize that this was no fluke and in fact, a message from Allah (SWT). Ibrahim (AS) loved his son, Ismail (AS). Yet he was fully prepared to follow Allah's (SWT) command and do as He instructed. He took his son to Mount Arafat along with a knife and rope. Upon reaching there, he told his son about his dream and what Allah SWT had commanded him to do. Being an obedient son, Prophet Ismail (AS) immediately obliged and asked that his hands and legs be tied so that he may not struggle and that his father blindfold himself so that he won't have to witness him suffer. Ibrahim (AS) did as Ismail (AS) had said. Blindfolded and with the knife in his hands, he did as Allah SWT had asked of him. When he took the blindfold off, to his surprise, he saw the body of a dead ram in front of him. Ismail (AS) was completely unharmed standing right next to him. At first, he thought that something had gone horribly wrong and that he had disobeyed the order of his Creator. But then he heard a voice telling him that Allah (SWT) looks after his followers and that he need not worry. Ibrahim (AS) and Ismail (AS) had just passed a difficult test from Allah SWT" ("Story of Ibrahim", n.d.).

However, in Milepost, the dream-symbol of the Mother recognizes the inadequacy and limitation of the ancient customs for solving the real crisis

in the changed situations of the present era. In this regard prominent poet and critic Sikandar Abu Zafar's opinion is noteworthy, "The dream-symbol of Milepost makes it clear that the formalization of sacrifice creates a kind of furor, but the real sacrifice does not happen in reality" (quoted in Rahman, 1995, p.55), particularly in the modern era.

So, when the religious zeal ends at the end of the play, forsaking the confusion regarding the sacrifice, they start talking about the possibilities of golden future that symbolizes hope as well. The Watchman, eventually broke the neck of the milepost – the symbol of the cruel certainty as a protest against the regulation of life and the limitation of life. It symbolizes the breaking of the boundaries that is the clear indication of the journey towards the new destination.

Some critics including eminent professor of English in University of Dhaka opine that in terms of comparative judgment and critical thinking, Milepost has some shortcomings as a play i.e. the structure of the play is not very well knitted, sometimes it fails to raise interest in the minds of the audience, and in some cases - regarding dialogue, visualization of scenes and characterization western formula followed superfluously (Chowdhury, 1989, p.88).

In spite of these weaknesses, the researcher finds Milepost is a unique addition in the history of Bengali theatre. Because of its unique ideas and its unconventional ways of presentation. The play moves our thoughts and encourages us going towards a new destination by coping up and defying the cruelty of the hostile nature.

8. Conclusion

It is found that the playwright uses the breaking of the milepost as a symbol of hope– it symbolizes not only the breaking of the limitations but also as a signal of possibility and continuation of life. It is the indication of the journey towards the new destination. Here is hope, meaning amongst the bleakness –a sense of "moving about in the night" (quoted. in Ward, 2015), a sense of carrying on, and a sense of outdoing helplessness and absurdity itself.

What is significant in this play, is that the characters like the other absurd plays, decided to last, struggle and continue living on as long as possible and never to surrender nullifying the unreasonable silence of the world. The truth

is –they do not just struggle with alienation, existential problems, absurdity; they struggle with the reality of life they live in. It suggests, whatever the situation is, human beings are capable of going beyond the enclosed condition eventually. Literature as well as major absurd plays of Ahmad, Ionesco, Pinter and Beckett, always have a strong association with hope; and waiting and/or enduring is an essential part of hope. Ahmad and Beckett are disseminators of hope against hope through the endeavor they are involved with and their absurd plays help us to comprehend that even though there is ‘nothing’, it is to be done. Even though the chariot of life is not in the control of human being, they must continue, holding on –life itself must continue paying no attention to the absurd conditions of life. This is the real essence of Ahmad’s play Milepost.

In this play, all the characters lead the audience as guide to the awareness and acceptance of the absurdity of life, in other words help us to face the reality of absurdity as well as the real-reality of life. They manage to both entertain us and make us laugh as well as make us see the world differently to perceive the real reality through absurdity. They are, in a way, asking the audience to reflect on their own lives and validate that they can either accept the meaninglessness of life or fight against it.

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