International Journal of Language and Literary Studies
Volume 8, Issue 1, 2026
Homepage : http://ijlls.org/index.php/ijlls

Theatre of the Absurd and Rajeshwar Prasad's Art of Characterisation in His Absurd Plays

Ramsurat
Jagdam College, Chapra, Bihar, India, 841301
ramsurat2521999@gmail.com

DOI: http://doi.org/ 10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2488
APA Citation: Ramsurat (2026). Theatre of the Absurd and Rajeshwar Prasad's Art of Characterisation in His Absurd Plays. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies. 8*(1).278-289. http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i1.2488

Received: *28/11/2025*

Accepted: *11/01/2026*

Keywords: *absurdity, joylessness, characterisation, existence, life.*

Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the Theatre of the Absurd as seen through a comparative lens. More specifically, through an analysis of Rajeshwar Prasad's seven plays of Theatre of the Absurd, how he characterizes characters using unique characterisation techniques. Through an examination of Prasad's use of fragmented dialogue, symbolic staging, and paradoxical characters, when mapped onto some modern playwrights and the canonical models established by Beckett, Ionesco, and their successors, it reveals two simultaneous themes embodied by the characters of Rajeshwar Prasad: one that displays a faith-filled, hopeful attitude, and the other a stark nihilistic attitude. This duality serves as a form of rebellion against strict narrative conventions, thereby incorporating the joylessness that is natural to humans and our desire for meaning. As illustrated in this analysis, Prasad's "absurd formula" of (aclp2t) + (afi2lms) + (tc) is very effective through the very characters that the playwright has created and revealed. Gradually, Prasad unveils life's 'absurdity'.

1. INTRODUCTION

Characterisation in modern English drama unfolds like a vivid tapestry – threads of culture and thought woven tight, shimmering from the noisy glow of London's stages to far-off shores. From the tangled minds of British stage figures to the bold, unyielding spirit of their American peers, each one mirrors society's constant change – like a face flickering in the light of a moving spotlight. In French plays translated into English, characters pulse with a quiet, existential unease – eyes fixed on the rain outside – while German dramas, through their own translations, press people beneath the strain of ideas and the heavy shadow of history. The Theatre of the Absurd moves beyond boundaries and removes its characters' fixed identities one by one, until what remains – like a mask breaking under a strong light – is the fragile foundation of human meaning. On the global stage of today, Indian English drama is vibrant with both tradition and modern life, where myth, memory, and the marginalised voices intertwine to create complex, deeply human selves. Rajeshwar Prasad is the pioneer of India's absurdist wave, changing the way characters breathe and break apart through fragmented stories and bright symbols – his pieces resonate with the sounds of Beckett and Ionesco but have the uneasy rhythm of home-grown unrest. His shows transform the stage into a sort of living question about being, where a held breath or the scrape of a chair can convey more than any line of dialogue. By blending languages and weaving cultures together, characterisation stops just standing for something – it starts breaking ground, like ink bleeding past the page's edge. His characters are immortal beings of their own nature. The audience sees that in regular absurd plays, the characters are absolutely absurd, but in his plays, some characters refute the absurdity of life. At the end of their life, they acknowledge that their life were absurd. He composed all plays based on the "Absurd coincidence formula" *(i.e., aclp^{2}t + afi^{2}lms + tc),* where as *'a = action', 'c = characters', 'l = language', 'p^2 = plot & place', 't = time'* + *'a =*

alienation', 'f = fear', 'i = isolation', 'l = loneliness', 'm = mystery', 's = suspense' + 't = tragic', 'c = comic'. Below are some of the explorations from the plays of modern European playwrights, American dramas, Indian dramas, and the Absurd plays by Prasad.

Modern drama's heart is its people, not the story. Ibsen makes each one a fragile piece of glass, every fracture reflecting society's own face. Shaw, however, makes them like neoteric wheels, intelligent cogs going through ideologies until it glows into satire, all the time revealing the pulse of the deepest desire. By contrast, they demonstrate that genuine profundity comes from the unvarnished truth of realism standing side by side with the incisive blow of comedy. As a result, characterisation becomes a dual instrument that reveals and conceals the moral vacuum of an era, similar to how light passes through broken glass. Mundra, JN & Sahni, CL (1991) rightly observe about the characterisation of GB Shaw:

> His plays are highly intellectual in character and the breeding ground of many revolutionary ideas. His wit and sparkling dialogues alleviate the boredom of discussion."

In modern American theatre, Arthur Miller alters individuals by associating their moral ambiguity with their experiences, represented in a kitchen as a man suddenly faces a moral dilemma and finds himself immersed in turmoil, a battleground of conscience. Joe Keller's (the protagonist in Miller's *'All My Sons'* disillusionment illustrates that pursuing the American Dream damages familial bonds and obligations to people outside the home represented by the white picket fence. Unlike one-dimensional characters, Miller's characters experience varying degrees of guilt and are burdened by the weight of their pasts; the contrast between the mental struggle of a kitchen at Dusk resonates with the mental anguish experienced by both Joe Keller and the protagonist of Eugene O'Neill's ('*Long Day's Journey into Night'*) and Tennessee Williams ('*A Streetcar Named Desire'*). This contrasting plan has developed into the foundation of Miller's writing style, which allows for the growth of each character in the same way that the setting of each scene provides an environment for the development of their characters. Heiney and Downs (1974) rightly observe regarding his portrayal of Miller's characters:

> "Basically a realist-naturalist, he concerns himself with the typical and outwardly normal in American life, and his style is straightforward and vernacular. He deliberately creates characters who are ordinary instead of extraordinary."

In T. S. Eliot's '*The Confidential Clerk'* (1954) and '*The Elder Statesman'* (1958), he appears to try to create a sense of ordinariness, but by doing so has lost the spiritual intensity that he had previously used to create significance in his previous writings. In contrast, playwrights such as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller appear to be moving away from the ordinary or prosaic toward the more extraordinary or poetic. It seems as if Eliot has, through the use of elaborate 'experimental' sets and an occasional use of 'fine' words, attempted to create a character with a great deal more to say than what their words actually say, and to create a character who is aware of all of the many different levels of meaning contained in their lines. Cunliffe (1963) rightly observes:

> "In *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958) of T. S. Eliot it would seem that the author strives for ordinariness, and in achieving it has weakened significance. With playwrights like Williams and Miller, it would seem that they try to move in the opposite direction, out of the prosaic toward the poetic. It is if these two, with their ambitiously 'experimental' sets and their intermittently 'fine' utterances, *hope* that their characters mean more than their speeches say, and are intellectually aware of a host of hidden meanings."

In the strange chemistry of modern poetic drama, Bottomley, Eliot, Masefield, and Abercrombie fuse the mind's inner workings into pulsing lines of speech, letting character surface not in confession but in held breath and measured silence. Silence shapes their forms – the long pause between words, the fractured syntax – so they stand as echoes of cultural dissonance, not unified selves. Eliot's hollow men, Abercrombie's ghostlike figures, and Bottomley's mythic voices cast off clear identity, chasing the echo and shimmer of language itself. A character turns into a chorus of absences, its subjectivity acted out, postponed, then taken apart within the poem's dark, echoing music. Singh (1988) rightly observes about the art of characterisation:

> "[...] he skilfully combines prose and verse, and, following the precedent of the ancient classical stages, introduces choral interludes. His language is well-wrought but lucid. His Christianity is quite conventional and, as such, unacceptable to the moderns. But there is a childlike quality in his conception and presentation which cannot go unobserved and uncommented."

Indian English drama shapes its characters into arguments where the residual colonial influences, post-colonial aspirations, and native traditions meet in crashing waves, making identities broken and very resilient. Playwrights like Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad, and Asif Currimbhoy are recognised for their hybrid forms of characterisation and their use of the tangled threads of caste, gender, and class; for reconfiguring Western Realism through their winding narratives and the jagged, pulsating beat of conversations that spill over from street corners. We find ourselves drawn to these characters, not through their complicated histories, but through their replication of a common struggle; even as their wars change, each move has been tempered by history and culture, like a staccato burst of energy amidst a cheering madhouse. By making character development an inherently political act, they expose the contradictions of contemporary life for a nation that is still coming to terms with its many, often conflicting identities, much like the voices clamouring to be heard during a street riot as described later in this article, as well as through the eyes of Postcolonial India. Naik (2005) obviously says about Currimbhoy's characters:

> "The characters are often unapologetically one-dimensional – e,g. "Goan Nationalist', 'Smuggler' etc. And when they have names, they remain little more than names [...] Here again, the emphasis appears to be more on the melodrama in the lives of the characters than on any attempt to understand the nature of the forces which have made them what they are."

The modern theatre presents characters as being stripped down to their basic, raw existence rather than displaying their well-crafted and polished Victorian appearances and instead showing broken and twisted souls hiding underneath the mask. Characters today do not represent the ethical beliefs of an era because they experience fear, isolation, and emptiness within themselves, and therefore their personal crisis becomes their identity. Playwrights like Beckett, Esslin and Pinter depict a fractured dialogue and absent pauses that signal the fragmentation of identity and identity returning to an in-between state. Heiney and Downs (1974) rightly observe:

> "In the nineteen fifties and sixties a new kind of theatre emerged in Paris and very soon reached out into the rest of Europe, to England and America."

Albert Camus utilises his writing to create characters with explicit philosophy, such that his anti-heroes, namely, Meursault and Rieux, serve as existential reflections of the absurd indifference of existence and to remove traditional literary character development so that such characters highlight the symbolic connection that humans have with their search for meaning

in an indifferent universe. Heiney and Downs (1974) rightly observe regarding his portrayal of characters in his works:

> "But in *The Myth of Sisphus* (1941) Camus had made a classic statement of the absurdity of the universe and man's position in it; [...] But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and light. Man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come."

Samuel Beckett strips his characters down to a spectral core where their identities are barely recognisable and quiver under the heavy silence and the repetition of words. His characters do not spring from the background, but rather, from the void; their voices quivering as if some fingers were trying to grasp a word that escapes. Beckett unveils through their shattered soliloquies and lifeless gestures the way being is just a show, which no one is the very faint sound of a deserted hall. To invent characters for Beckett is to dismantle them, human beings unshielded, faltering in the bleak air, impossible to let go of. Heiney and Downs (1974) rightly observe regarding his art of characterisation in '*Waiting for Godot'*:

> "They are too competent to commit suicide: it doesn't work Pozzo, the master and Lucky, the slave, roped to each other at a distance, enter; business with boots, bats, and bags. Lucky is goaded into "thinking" and making a speech, a veritable torrent of words..."

'Waiting for Godot' has at its core a raw, unvarnished pathos coupled with an almost basic, fundamental simplicity. The stage is drawn in a radical economic manner, eschewing the more common backdrops of Elizabethan plays. There are very few traditional story progressions and well-developed characters; in fact, they are blatantly – and even rebelliously – absent. Beckett's perspective is characterised by a strict, uncompromising artistic asceticism which mirrors the unwavering intellectual and spiritual fervour seen in personalities like Pascal and Kierkegaard. Sampson (1961) rightly observes:

> 'There is genuine pathos in Godot, and genuine simplicity: the setting is not even the Elizabethan "another part of the field" but (Act I) "A country Road, A tree Evening" and (Act II) "next Day, Same Time, Same Place." Plot and character are virtually – even self-righteously – absent: there is something of the fanaticism of Pascal and Kierkegaard about Beckett's artistic Puritanism.'

Ionesco creates characters as broken mirrors that reflect pieces of the absurdity of language and the void behind identity – his grotesque, archetypal figures dissolve into incisive caricatures of social rituals that are devoid of any trace of inner life. Dialogue becomes a prison, its repeated phrases and scattered comments revealing the futility of genuine connection, voices dying against cold metal. In this anti-theatre, to develop a character is to demolish oneself, being exposed by the very words that were supposed to hold it, like wallpaper being removed under too much light. Heiney and Downs (1974) obviously reveal:

> "[...]with dehumanized and mechanical "characters," and with absurdity and with absurdity exaggerated *non sequiter* and often repetitious dialogue, was followed by a gradual movement toward the more traditional, progress [...] toward moments of lucidity in *The Chairs* (1951) and a more humanly aware character in the Berenger of four subsequent plays..."

Jean Jenet reaches deeply into people's souls with the precision of a surgeon movement of the wrist being a silent admission, unveiling that which is least of all to be seen. He refrains from any ornamentation, thereby allowing the sheer purpose to determine every line to the

extent that the character appears to be breathing facade, just a life pulse going by. Heiney and Downs (1974) obviously write:

> "As a playwright Genet is something more, at least something other than simply an absudist writer. His plays are additionally a kind of ritual theatre, with overtones of a theatre of cruelty; they are fully fleshed and quite distinctly original."

One of Prasad's most impressive moves in giving the full account of the human condition is in showing not only the disillusionment that follows the initial conviction but also the characterisation as a moral stance on how life's truth always comes at the expense of belief, which is a humane gesture that critics will see as an introduction of a new conceptual theatrical dimension in the genre of absurdist theatre. The present research will provide an in-depth analysis of the creative work of characterisation and how it affects the audience's sympathies and their self-awareness, and thus, will be a sort of empathic journey through the human condition that this playwright has embarked upon. Prasad (2022) reveals in his play entitled *'Zero into Four'*:

> "Life is zero into four,
> The world abuses ever.
> All blast this short fuse –
> Showing a short amuse."

Let us visualise the twins under their trees for a moment, a scene loaded with symbols. James, under the 'peepal' (a tree often regarded as sacred), eats his mother's made sweet porridge with great pleasure. For a short time, he is the incarnation of a world that still holds water, where love is real and can be boxed for lunch. Amol, on the other hand, is sitting miserably under the 'neem' (a bitter tree) and crying. He is the harbinger of the new, bleak epoch, the kid who has already uttered the paradox "man is of 'zero into four', by zero into four', and for 'zero into four'". One of Prasad's talents is to portray the philosopher as an emotionally overwhelmed boy; the existential horror is therefore not an intellectual speculation but a gut-wrenching, childlike suffering. James is 'faith' – in love, in mothers, and in a logical universe. Amol is 'experience' – the harsh, growing-up-too-fast knowledge of being left alone. The difference between them is not in terms of personalities, but in that of metaphysical properties. Prasad (2022) reveals:

> "JAMES: *(Giving Amol some sweet-porridge by holding it to his mouth.)* Tell me, my dear friend. Take it and eat.
> AMOL: *(Continues to weep.)*
> JAMES: Why do you not take it? It is too sweet.
> AMOL: *(Weeping.)* I will not eat.
> JAMES: Why?
> AMOL: Nothing is sweet.
> JAMES: Why are you sad, Amol? Why weep so?"

This character-driven absurdity reaches its peak when James and his home come together. We usually imagine a domestic environment to be a place of peace. Prasad here brings in his best idea yet. Mother to be, Zara, is not a villain. To be more specific, she is, scarily enough, an average person. She gives toffees and eats; she kisses her son. Her love, in the moments when it is allowed to live, is genuine. This is the point that highlights Prasad's performance as not only a social commentary but as an expression of the human condition. The terror is not in her being evil, but in her incapacity. She is under the control of the 'supreme agency' and the 'new uncle waiting outside'. Her leaving is not wrought with malice, but it is a chilling, bureaucratic inevitability. She is equally a victim of the ridiculous equation as the children holding onto her feet. Prasad (2022) reveals:

ZARA: *(Tries to be free from their clutches. Forcibly.)* I can't stay. This is the order of the supreme agency. None can cancel this order. I am unable to disregard this order. None can disregard the system of 'zero into four'."

Prasad subjects his senseless world to a brutal analysis with his very own absurd plays in his deco-style domestic apocalypse, using the concept of language as a landscape. His play, *'Zero into Nine'*, doesn't present the environment of a cosmic void but narrates the devastating effects of such a world inside the guest room of a house. It is here that his characterisation skills are at their peak, with presenting the two old men, SAM and JAX, characters are not only reflect the broken society but also reveal the decay beneath through the touching juxtaposition of these two aged men: SAM and JAX.JAX comes on stage as a funeral statement of a life lived. Prasad depicts him not with an overall depressed tone, but by the delicate, agonising aspects of renounced wisdom. With this character, he is also the main nihilistic formula of the play: 'zero into nine'. There is no way to reject his reasoning; any number, any life, when multiplied by the void of zero, becomes nothing. The beatings, as physical, are only part of it; they are the constant, erosive neglect from his own flesh, a metaphor for a society that disposes of its old, its history. The suggestion of the neighbours to 'endure all sorrows joyfully' is like a stamp of collective moral decay, an indifferent gesture of the community that makes suffering become the new normal. JAX is not an angry man; rather, he is out of tears. He is the nihilistic prophet, and his gospel is one of equal and complete despair. 'All are the same', he whispers, a truth he has experienced through his suffering. Prasad (2025) reveals:

"GAY: Now I will shoot all of you. I will die and will let none live. It is better to die if all are the same."

Contrary to him, Prasad assigns the position of SAM, a person who was completely built on the vulnerable supporting beams of his own delusions. Where JAX is characterised by what has been taken from him, SAM is characterised by what he thinks he has: five sons, numerous grandsons, honour, and a 'happy life'. He is the strongest supporter of the 'zero plus nine' formula, the optimistic arithmetic that life leads to something. He is the portrait of every father figure who confuses silence with respect, sense of duty with love, and the achievement of family unity with reality. His character is a lie that is very well done, and the audience knows it instinctively. His act of comforting JAX seems empty to us since it is grounded in his own unprivileged life, a privilege that will be turned upside down soon. Prasad (2025) reveals:

"JAX: The formula is false. Its colour is changed – its shape is changed and we are victims of this mathematical formula. 'Zero plus nine' is equal to 'nine' and 'zero into nine' is 'zero'. In this way, several mathematical ways are just like our life. Our life is false. The world is also false."

Prasad's brilliance in the demolition is the characterisation. Instead of having a villain storm in, he has reality breaking in the form of GAY. Everything in SAM's world, which was so meticulously planned, is now disrupted by an element that he can't handle with his usual logic – a child that has two names, PRE and POST, a perfect figure of two contradictory things and of ones that can't be resolved. The 'matter of honour' which SAM uses as a support is now seen as a thin curtain hiding a world of chaotic, illogical human nature. His offered ways to solve the problem are worthless, and his power, which he is laughing at, is gone. The master of the family becomes a quiet, powerless old man with a baby that only stands for contradictions and one he is holding. Prasad (2025) reveals through his character, Sam:

"SAM: Don't repeat this word to any other. Forget that PRE is of PRE-marriage. Say that he is off, and POST nine months of the marriage."

In Rajeshwar Prasad's play, *'Zero into Plus'*, three archetypes – Jay, Ray, and Don – are each described as embodying different ways of facing the problem of being butie shared the fate of being sucked revere an 'absurd' vortex. This brilliant 'character duelling' aims to satirise how even these most opposing perspectives become meaningless when facing the indifferent cosmos. Prasad's talent is to give them these exaggerated traits while still getting the audience to sympathise with them on a 'philosophic' and even personal level, thus he is touching societal and 'moral' issues deeply. Prasad (2025) reveals:

> "JAY: Temples also have crematoria – mosques and churches also have graveyards.
> DON: Really, there is not even a single religious place where there are no graveyards and crematoria.
> JAY: Crematoria and graveyards are the holiest places.
> DON: I know well. I am their keeper.
> RAY: This is everywhere. All know.
> JAY: But all are afraid of these places.
> RAY: This is not a matter. God manages everything and for His management all this is.
> DON: There is no God. God is hope which is never seen and witnessed."

Jay, the Aliet Charitable Trust patron, is a character born out of 'nihilistic disillusionment triumphant.' His 'humane' character arc is not just a pity but a tragedy, coming from very heavy personal sacrifice – the death of his wife and having no children. The reason why he combined his 'all attempts and actors are equally futile' with negation of all except desperation and not hatred was not because he was of an evil heart, but owing to his dreadful perception of a 'dry and loveless' world where 'God's non-existence' pact had been broken between God and man, so that humanity was doomed while the world went on. Jay looks at charity as 'stupid,' his 'self-standing' indicating his loneliness and emotional estrangement. Prasad makes Jay one of the good guys, not as an antihero, but only as a person in pain whom we understand and sympathise with, whose hopelessness is more a challenge to us than a defeat. He is the scholar who battles widespread intellectual despair; thus, his character 'real and relatable despite its despondent outlook. Prasad (2025) reveals:

> "RAY: *(Weeps.)* Oh...oh! All of my family members who were staying in the Hotel Aliet have been killed in the bomb blasts.
> JAY: It seems that we will not save ourselves from this condition because the firing has begun at our office and it is announced by the administration that militants are hiding in another cell of this office and have captured some pilgrims who they plan to kill."

Don's bewildering story becomes even more complicated with Don, the pilgrim who openly boasts about himself being a 'robber and killer', but at the same time says that he is 'happy with his evil deeds'. Don is 'wholly outside the moral convention', a frightening, yet 'engaging' study of radical amorality. His 'absurd' logic – 'giving back to the system' by returning stolen money to the police so that the money can be taken back and the thief escapes – is a 'moral critical idea' which deeply questions the conventional understanding of justice and accountability. Don is a picture of nihilism, not as despairing as Jay's, but as an active, an opportunistic choice of life's 'purposelessness'. His survival, while Jay and Ray are shot dead randomly, emphasises the central theme of the play: that chaos is random and 'moral' systems cannot protect one. Don's mysterious disappearance at the end confirms his role as the ultimate 'absurd' world survivor, instilling a lingering, haunting question mark over the theme of 'good' and 'evil'. Prasad (2025) reveals:

> "DON: I am a robber – I am a killer. I rob the life of man – I rob everything of man – for me, another's life is zero – for me, life is a plaything."

On the other hand, Frank, first of all, is depicted as a man among the 'top ten of the world' who then embodies the stereotypical conception of the successful man and dauntless optimism. He is 'happy in his life and with his business success', stating that 'life is full of joy' and 'happiness is the synonym of life'. Prasad's 'characterisation' of Frank is a favourable picture of a man who seemingly had control over the situation and whose confidence might be an inspiration to others. Yet the absurd is quick to disassemble this seeming perfection, which is exactly what it is. The impracticable foundation of Frank's illusion of perfection lies in his very character, poised to fall under alien forces. His function is to unveil how our truths that we construct wildly tumble. Prasad (2020) reveals:

> FRANK: I am fine. My business is fine. I have earned billions of dollars in this period of recession. Now I am the richest man in the country – I am one of the top ten in the world. And I hope in the next five years if God helps me, I will become the richest man in the world."

The brilliance of Prasad's 'art of characterisation' is most clearly demonstrated in the fact that these two characters, who are complete opposites, come to share the same view of the absurd, though their experiences are totally different. While Harry, through his own life experience, comes to perceive the absurd but in a very resigned way, Frank is thrown headlong into it, and his reaction is quite opposite. The information about the crash of the stock market and the warrant issued for his arrest because of 'bank debts' annihilate Frank's universe in such a way that he experiences 'sudden sadness' which is not only a sign of his own misfortune but also a representation of the absurd in that it shows how fate can be arbitrary and at the same time be the cause for the absurd. His 'joy' before was just a delusion of happiness, depending on something outside of his control. Frank's journey from top to bottom – from being the most successful to going completely broke – is portrayed as 'real' and 'engaging', thus the viewers are made to consider the instability of their own lives. This 'character contrast' reaches its climax with both of them going through the same stage of disenchantment, insinuating that no matter what kind of person one is at the beginning, the absurd is the one who finally wins. Prasad (2020) reveals:

> "FRANK: I lost everything.
> HARRY: Look at the television screen.
> FRANK: A non-bail-able warrant against all those, who had not paid bank debts. Oh! I lost everything. There is also an order to lock my company – and the companies of all the debtors – of all the loan defaulters."

Prasad's moral critical ideas become inseparable from the story as it progresses. The descent of Frank becomes a lampoon on the idea of material success being the only yardstick of joy and unpacks the hollowness of the good life that comes to a face-off with life's capriciousness. Nevertheless, the despair of Harry gets a sort of support from the very opposite end – his character. What at first seemed like a cynical view of the world now turns out to be more like prophetic. The tragedy is not that the play encourages hopelessness but that it, through the complex 'characterisation' of both men, propagates the idea of life's uncertainties as the case.

The 'absurdist formula' of $(aclp^2t) + (afi^2lms) + (tc)$ is very effective through the very characters that the playwright has created and revealed. The 'reduced action' and 'plot' of waiting for Well extend the inner conflicts of Harry and Frank. Well's going unobserved, ending with his disturbing, scattered death, is the ultimate 'absurd' happening that, therefore, throws out the meaning the characters, as well as the spectators, have to reflect beyond. This deepens the 'sense of alienation, fear, isolation, insecurity, loneliness, mystery and suspense' that are present in their characters. Harry's initial alienation is self-imposed, a conscious

philosophical stance, while Frank's is externally imposed, a cruel twist of fate. Both of them are 'tragic-comic' characters now: Harry with his resigned acceptance of a 'Godless and joyless world' and Frank in the dramatic irony of his sudden downfall from the heights of success.

At first, Cecil is the societal model of success to the highest point. Via the 'Managing Director' living in a 'well-known colony of London', he is the personification of not only material well-being but also social prestige, and the stability of life that is assured and balanced. He is a standard case of a man of the old school who, in his first confrontation with the needy, demonstrates his willingness to help, and this could even be for his self-gratification by that 'ten pounds'. But, Prasad is on a mission here to slowly dismantle the pretentiousness of Cecil's happiness in the face of his power and money, love and family, as well as a less conscious selfhood with the world. The point of impact in the drama is when he is transformed from the happiest man to the most tragic one by this confounded story of his death. His lament of 'neither for the place nor for the bags' reveals that the seemingly secure material life is nothing but a mere mask which hides deeply seated pains. The story of Cecil is that of going from being satisfied with life to disillusionment and heartbreak; thus, his personality is so compelling and 'real' that the tragedy of his character is felt anywhere. His collapse is a social satire on the manner of criticism of how culture frequently portrays happiness as the acquisition of goods, while life only in the end reveals the shallow morphology of such joys. Prasad (2020) reveals:

> Cecil: "[*Happily*] I have many things! I have a villa in Gold Colony and around it crossroads. The neighbourhood has all the facilities of the age – a school, a college, a university, a telephone exchange, a post office, a hi-fi hospital and all others in my neighbourhood – A to Z before my house which I use and enjoy. We live happily. It seems that it is heaven on the earth. Amid all this, there is my shining and sparkling villa which is gold-coated. Everything is there."

Alvin is on the opposite side of the spectrum from Cecil and the play's most intriguing philosophical perspective. 'Rich in spirit but poor in material, disconnected, and destitute, he signifies nothing but the total rejection of society and the most absolute loneliness. Alvin is not just a hapless individual; instead, he is the bearer of the doom of the world to which he belongs. Through his refrain 'Man is a passer-by who comes and goes...' and subsequently his 'song of atheistic existentialism', he very clearly unfolds the central theme of the play. By doing so, he compels the viewers to plunge into the emptiness, messing with the thoughts of Cecil and Blair, who confront but wish to ignore these facts. Alvin's combative behaviour, wielding a 'knife to attack' while assaulting, is only one moment of a violent struggle for recognition and space in a world which has always denied him both. The last move of Alvin's – that is, his leap onto the railway for his 'permanent home' – is terrifying as it is essentially 'human'. It is a sorrowful, ultimate proclamation in an absurd universe of his will, a decision of total non-existence over absolute lack of meaning in life. Alvin dramatises the magnificent tragedy of facing the absence of meaning smile upon him, as his suicide becomes a strong indictment of the human spirit when taken to its utmost brink. He is the 'moral critical idea' brought to life, provoking the audience to consider beyond flattering deceptions. Prasad (2020) reveals:

> "ALVIN: What will you do? Look at my pocket. Do you see it? See a new and edgy knife."

Rajeshwar Prasad's *'The Travellers'* is a 'humane' and 'philosophic' characterisation triumph. He depicts the downfall of Cecil, the radical truth-telling and final resignation of Alvin, and the defensive evasion of Blair to sew a deep 'social' discourse on class, belonging, and the universal quest for meaning. These characters, while archetypes, are shown to have 'real' fears and sufferings, thus their destiny becomes 'engaging' and unforgettable. The work of Prasad in the creation of these characters, their mingling and their final tragic-comic fates, acts as a potent

memorial to the incessant human struggle amid the 'absurd' cosmos, thereby imprinting deeply on the reader's conscience.

Characterisation in *'The Wife'* by Prasad is a philosophical matter. The play essentially focuses on the two characters, Weston and Carter and their differences. Carter is the opposite and more than that, the supporter of the thesis who is confident that 'the reign of God exists and He is the Supreme Power – the world is full of delights and love – and man's life is meaningful.' Through the description of Carter's character, we identify the presence of a 'social' and 'moral' critique of faith unshakable. He is characterised by 'joy with life,' but his joy seems to be a delicate one, based on a faith that the course of the play keeps frequently questioning. Prasad skilfully depicts Carter's optimism not as a power but as a refuge, a survival tactic, a desperate holding on to a worldview that, in the end, is overpowered by the indifferent cosmos. His persona is 'heart-touching' in his passion but 'tragic-comic' in his final, vain defeat, throwing the flickering 'absurdity of life' that no belief is exempt from further. Prasad (2021) reveals:

"CARTER: The world is full of pleasure and beauty."

Helena, the title 'wife, 'may be the most 'astonishing' and 'engaging' of Prasad's characterisations of the absurd. If we are to talk about her character, it is built on the absence and vagueness of the character. The lady is the one they are fighting over; both Carter and Robert say she is theirs, but in the case when she is addressed to verify her identity, 'Helena does not speak.' Instead of a human, she represents the very nature of the world of absurdity with regard to 'truth', 'identity', and 'possession'. Her silence is quite eloquent, signifying the 'humane' trouble of being a subject in the stories of men, the end of the road of trying to give these things permanent identities in a volatile universe. By leaving during the fracas with the men bleeding and dying later, she is truly demonstrating that she is one of those rare, completely uninterested and uncomprehending beings, a mirror to the whole god-awful cosmos. The depiction is 'audiences' heart-winning' for the amazing insight into gender and agency in the absurdist framework. Prasad (2021) reveals:

"ROBERT: What are you doing here, HELENA?
HELENA: [*Silent*]
ROBERT: HELENA?
HELENA: [*Silent*]
ROBERT: With whom you have come here?
HELENA: *(Looks at CARTER. Silent.)*
ROBERT: With CARTER?
HELENA: Yes?
ROBERT: Why?
CARTER: Who's this man, HELENA?
HELENA: I don't know.
ROBERT: She is my wife.
CARTER: She is my wife! She is my life!"

Nevertheless, the real highlight of Prasad's characterisation is still with KNOW ALL in *'Teachers' Day'*. The 'chief guest', who 'won the Novel Prize' and 'The World's Best Teacher Award', was being hyped up as nothing less than the greatest exemplar of the Kannada metaphysics. However, he doesn't come. The space he occupies in the imagination, the expectation revolving around him, is the fulcrum on which the seminar balances. His director DAR's report on his death is harshly anti-climactic: 'KNOW ALL has become a victim of the failure of the signal in the plane in which he is travelling. The system of opening the door is also out of order... the aeroplane has crashed, and KNOW ALL is no more in this world. The farcical nature of the accident is such that it instantly makes ridiculous all the discussions put forward in the play concerning 'Man and Divinity'. In spite of his nonappearance, KNOW

ALL's character is the ultimate tragicomic figure, his fate a chilling display of how even the most celebrated intellect can be stunned by the most random, mechanical absurdity. It is a 'readers' heart-touching moment of supreme irony, confirming KIM's worldview while shattering MAX's. Prasad (2025) reveals:

> "DAR: Just I have got important information. Please listen to me. Pray to God for KNOW ALL's happy arrival here. The signal system of his plane has failed. The door has been jammed. Now the plane is flying without any signal. It is not known in which direction his plane is going. The pilot told all passengers to evacuate with the help of parachutes to save their life before the plane crashes. They tried hard using their knowledge and wisdom to save their life but they all failed to unlock the door."[18]

Rajeshwar Prasad's 'Art of Characterisation' in *'Teachers' Day'* is both 'humane' and 'morally critical'. Prasad populates his characters with the intellect of a genius, yet does not remove their human frailty in the face of the regularly absurd caprice of the world. The stark 'character contrast' between MAX and KIM, the symbolic use of the absent KNOW ALL, and the indifferent, bureaucratic DAR, altogether, create an 'engaging' narrative that is deeply philosophical and emotionally resonant. Prasad's characters are not merely actors in an absurd play; they are deeply moving reminders of our common human struggle to derive meaning, thereby making his work an 'outstanding, favourable' addition to modern Indian theatre. Thus, an 'editor's heart-winning' and 'readers' heart-touching' exploration of contemporary existentialism stays consistent.

2. CONCLUSION

In Prasad's Absurd plays, a variety of colours make for a bright representation of the brokenness of the spirit, allowing the audience to see how far beyond the limitations of the artistically created characterisation an artist can go. As the theatre of absurdity continues to evolve, so do the people that populate it. Prasad's characters do not simply represent hopelessness but instead provide a way for the characters to reflect the process of change.

Unlike the rigid archetypes of classical Absurdism, Prasad's characters embody the complex interplay between faith and nihilism within the complex tapestry of the human condition and human weakness. The character's journey from early hope to an understanding of the meaningless nature of their life highlights how, through these journeys, their characters are deeply invested in existential questions and can provide their audiences with both experience and reflection.

The brilliance of Prasad, however, is in his ability to overturn the definition of the "absurd coincidence formula" *(i.e., $aclp^2t + afi^2lms + tc$)* and create a dynamic interaction of the spiritual and the temporal. This complex duality that his character's experience illustrates the relationship between a desire for divine purpose and the rejection of that concept in light of nothingness. The qualities that his characters illustrate, and the manner in which they express this duality, create a unique signature in the fusion of fragmented speech with expressive gestures that combine and create a connection between life and his work. In that connection, Prasad has bridged the nihilism of Beckett with the possibility of transformation, providing a uniquely creative perspective on both.

Compared to the works of the Western canon of Absurdism, Prasad's work is set within the context of a specific culture. For example, Ionesco's works, tragicomedies, and Eliot's works about "hollow men" both highlight the "banality of despair", whereas Prasad's work provides its characters with the rhythms and details of Indian English plays, where myriads of voices converge, as well as the collective experiences of the country in trying to adapt to modernisation. While the characters in the plays of both Miller and Williams deal with the moral ambiguity of the situation on a personal level, Prasad's characters deal with moral ambiguity on a collective level as well; that is, they are the "chorus of existence," as they move

through and attempt to rebuild from the remnants of tradition and deal with the dissonance of new modernisation.

In conclusion, Prasad's absurdist theatrical work demonstrates that art can survive in an era that is breaking apart in this digital age and several new genres of literature in the modern age, although imperfectly, and that while his characters are searching for something that appears to be hopelessly lost, they still possess a flickering ember of humanity that can resist the forces of nihilism. His integration of the ethical with the absurd creates a dramatic environment where meaning is not absent but rather in a constant state of flux, like the flame of a candle that persists against the darkness. As theatre assumes a more global context, it will increasingly question the various masks of identity in different ways, seeking its place; one thing is certain: as this article explores in Prasad's plays, humanity is forever imperfectional.

REFERENCES

1. Mundra, JN & Sahni, CL. (1991). *Advanced Literary Essays*. Prakash Book Depot.
2. Heiney, D & Downs, LH (1974) *Recent American Literature* (after 1930), Volume 4. Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
3. Cunliffe, Marcus. (1963). *The Literature of the United States*. Penguin Books.
4. Singh, Tajindar. (1988). *History of English Literature*. Student Store.
5. Heiney, D & Downs, LH (1974) *Continental European Literature,* Volume 1. Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
6. Naik, MK. (2005). *A History of English Literature.* Sahitya Akademi.
7. Sampson, George. (1961). *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, Cambridge University Press.
8. Prasad, R. (2022). *Zero into Four.* TSL Publications, UK.
9. Prasad, R. (2025). *Zero into Nine*. TSL Publications, UK.
10. Prasad, R. (2025). *Zero into Plus*. TSL Publications, UK.
11. Prasad, R. (2020). *The Tribute*. TSL Publications, UK.
12. Prasad, R. (2020). *The Travellers*. TSL Publications, UK.
13. Prasad, R. (2021). *The Wife*. TSL Publications, UK.
14. Prasad, R. (2025). *Teachers' Day*. TSL Publications, UK.

AUTHOR'S BIO

***Dr Ramsuart** is an Assistant Professor of English at Jagdam College, Chapra, brings literature alive as ink on fresh paper, singing. He has a PhD, in which he made a comparative study of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai, both authors he identified as giving voice to hidden females. He is the author of six sharp articles that are still around, which, as Indian English criticism they have been sprinkled with lyricism and have a deep impact.*

.