HiLL PUBLISHING

Journal of Literature Advances, 2026, 3(1), 17-23
https://www.hillpublisher.com/Journals/jla/
ISSN Online: 3066-0998

"Godot" in *Gitanjali*? –An Analysis on the Lexical Semblances between *Waiting for Godot* and selected Songs of *Gitanjali*

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How to cite this paper: Mariyam Khatun. (2026). "Godot" in *Gitanjali*? –An Analysis on the Lexical Semblances between *Waiting for Godot* and selected Songs of *Gitanjali*. *Journal of Literature Advances*, 3(1), 17-23. DOI: 10.26855/jla.2026.06.002

Received: January 7, 2026
Accepted: February 28, 2026
Published: March 20, 2026

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Abstract

Lexical items play the role of an important component in the construction of meaning of a literary work. While semantic analysis focuses on the objective or general meaning of a text, discourse analysis emphasizes on the subjective or local meaning. On the other hand, Pragmatic focuses on what the speaker means by a particular utterance. But to understand what the writer of a text intends to convey, or what the attitude of the text is, one has to focus not only on the component of language, but also on the way the language is used. This work will analyze the major lexical items used in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and in selected songs from *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore. While the words appear similar on the surface, their resonances reveal contrasting worldviews: the existential uncertainty and philosophical void of Western modernism versus the spiritual plenitude and devotional longing at the heart of Eastern mysticism. Through a comparative lexical-pragmatic analysis, the paper shows how identical linguistic units generate opposite attitudes toward divinity, human agency, and the search for meaning.

Keywords

Lexical items; Discourse analysis; Waiting; Bond; Nothing

1. Introduction

In linguistic studies, discourse analysis examines not only the structural components of language but also the contexts and purposes for which those components are employed (Yule, 2014). The meaning of a literary text therefore emerges not simply from the presence of particular words, but from the ways in which those words are situated within a broader interpretive framework (Khatun, 2022). Consequently, identical lexical items may produce markedly different semantic and philosophical implications depending on their textual environment. The comparison between Waiting for Godot and Gitanjali becomes meaningful when understood as a dialogue between two opposing intellectual traditions—Western existential modernism and Eastern spiritual mysticism. Beckett's vocabulary conveys an atmosphere of absurdity, repetition, and deferred meaning, whereas Tagore employs similar lexical forms to evoke surrender, divine intimacy, and inner transformation. Instead of referring to "same lexical items" or "attitude of the text," this study examines the lexical resonance and semantic orientation of key expressions to show how they shape each work's philosophical landscape.

This study adopts a comparative lexical-thematic methodology to examine selected songs from *Gitanjali* by

Rabindranath Tagore and the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. A number of key lexical items—such as "waiting," "hope," "nothing," "bond," and "saviour"—are selected on the basis of their thematic relevance and recurrence within the two texts. The analysis interprets these lexical choices within their broader philosophical contexts. While Beckett's usage often reflects the existential uncertainty and metaphysical void associated with modernist absurdism, Tagore's employment of similar expressions evokes spiritual longing and devotional surrender. By examining how identical or similar lexical forms operate in different semantic environments, the study seeks to reveal the contrasting philosophical orientations underlying the two works.

2. Common Lexical Components

To clarify these interpretive differences, the shared lexical terrain is best approached thematically. The following framework structures the comparison: Waiting and Hope—the act of awaiting an absent or unattainable figure; The Search for Purpose—the human struggle against meaninglessness; The Figure of the Saviour—the longing for a redeeming presence; and Nothingness and Bond—the contrasting experiences of existential void and spiritual connection. This thematic organisation allows us to trace how identical words carry divergent pragmatic force in Beckett's drama of deferral and Tagore's lyric of devotion.

Several lexical items used in both the texts are— "waiting", "hope", 'shelter', "savior", "bond", "nothing", "death", and the common theme is the waiting for an unattainable being and searching for a purpose in life. For analytical clarity, these expressions may be grouped into broader thematic clusters:

(i) *Waiting* and *Hope*, which reflect the expectation of an absent or deferred figure;

(ii) *Saviour* and *Bond*, which suggest the possibility of recognition, salvation, or divine relationship; and

(iii) *Nothingness* and *Death*, which represent either existential void or spiritual transformation.

Organising the lexical analysis under these thematic categories allows a clearer comparison between the existential perspective of Beckett's play and the devotional spirituality expressed in Tagore's poetic voice.

Waiting is an essential and characteristic aspect of the human condition. Throughout our lives we always wait for something. Godot in *Waiting of Godot* and the Lord in *Gitanjali* represent the objective of our waiting—an event, a thing, a person, death. The two tramps in *Waiting for Godot* and the poetic persona in *Gitanjali*—all are eagerly waiting for Someone's arrival being unaware of when whom they are waiting for will come. But they become immovable thinking of missing the chance to meet that person. They all believe that the person they are waiting for will surely come but when, they know nothing about it. In such a situation they decide to wait until that person comes. In *Waiting for Godot* Vladimir confirms to Estragon that they cannot move because they are waiting for Godot:

> **Estragon:** … Let's go.
> **Vladimir:** We can't.
> **Estragon:** Why not?
> **Vladimir:** We are waiting for Godot.

In the same way the poetic persona in Song no. 41 of *Gitanjali* remains immovable just because he/she is waiting for his/her Lord:

> "The morning time is past, and the noon.
> …
> …
> …
> that for thee I wait, and that thou hast promised to come."

In both the texts the waiting is for recognition. In *Waiting for Godot*, Godot is the emblem of recognition. Estragon does ask once in the text: "Do you think God sees me?". Vladimir too says: "At me too someone is looking…" They wait for Godot because at least he will recognise them and thus, make them feel that they exist.

The poetic voice in Song no 41 of *Gitanjali* too longs for recognition from his/her Lord: "…when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust…" The God will recognise him/her and uplift him/her to a higher status.

At a time in the text of *Waiting for Godot* Estragon comments: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" "Nothing" is an important lexical item in the text. The two characters repeatedly state— "Nothing to be

done." The purpose of life is nothing. None of the characters has a defined role to play. That is why they always keep themselves engaged in something so that they can feel that they exist. Estragon almost rhetorically questions Vladimir: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?". In the world of nothingness, they need at least one who can provide them with a purpose to live. And for them, it can be only Godot who may give a purpose to their lives. That is why they are relentlessly waiting for Godot.

On the other hand, the same lexical expression assumes a different resonance in *Gitanjali*. In Song No. 23, the speaker confesses: "I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies thy path." Here, "nothing" does not represent existential emptiness but rather the humble acknowledgement of human limitation before the divine. The absence perceived by the poetic voice becomes a stage in the spiritual quest—a moment of longing that intensifies the desire for communion with the divine presence.

Again, in Song no. 15, the poetic voice says— "In the world I have no work to do; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose". The phrase "no work to do" sounds similar to "nothing to be done" in *Waiting for Godot.* Here, too, the speaker searches for a purpose in life from the Lord. At least his/her life will find a purpose if the Lord meets him/her and allows him/her to sing for Him. At one point in the play Estragon remarks: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful." The lexical item "nothing" becomes central to the existential atmosphere of *Waiting for Godot*. Its repetition in the line "Nothing to be done" captures the sense of paralysis that defines the characters' existence. In Beckett's dramatic universe, the word signifies a condition of existential suspension, where action, meaning, and purpose remain indefinitely deferred. The characters attempt to fill this void through repetitive conversation and trivial activities, yet their efforts only reinforce the underlying sense of futility.

Another lexical item recurrent in both the texts is "hope". It is always the hope which bids people wait for the unattainable being. In both the texts, the hope is constantly deferred as the meeting with the person whom the characters are waiting for is deferred again and again. But their hope never dies. In *Waiting for Godot,* Vladimir and Estragon still live in hope: they wait for Godot, whose coming will bring the flow of time to a stop. "Tonight perhaps we shall sleep in his place, in the warmth, dry, our bellies full, on the straw. It is worth waiting for that. Is it not?" This passage, omitted in the English version, clearly suggests the peace, the rest from waiting, the sense of having arrived in a heaven, that Godot represents to the two tramps. (Esslin, 2008). Again, Vladimir once comments: "Hope deferred maketh the something sick." Here, he brings the reference of Proverb XVIII, which states: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when desire cometh, it is a tree of life." In Song no. 13 of the *Gitanjali*, the speaker confesses: "I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet." But the hope is never lost. For both the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* and the poetic persona in the *Gitanjali* it is their desire to meet the person whom they are supposed to have an appointment with which incites their hope. The hope also comes out of the promise made to them. In Song no. 41 of The *Gitanjali* the speaker states: "…thou hast promised to come." As the speaker feels the heavenly signals such as sound of the chariot, glimpse of light and smell, the hope to meet the God gets enkindled. In *Waiting for Godot*, the Boy informs the two tramps: "Mr Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow." Thus, the promise enkindles their hope and the boy becomes the symbol of hope for them.

The image of a "saviour" is another construction in both the texts. The desire which incites the hope of those characters is basically of being saved. They wish to be saved from the purposelessness of life. They expect the saviour to take them out of their purposeless lives, and to give meaning to them. In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon and Vladimir constantly discuss the Saviour who saves the thief from "death/hell". But what they themselves really longs for from the Saviour is to be saved from that life in which they themselves are not sure of its existence.

3. Common Setting of time

The setting of time in both the texts is the end of the day, and before the night falls. The stage direction of Waiting for Godot shows that the time is evening: "A country road. A tree. Evening." And Vladimir's statement in the text "Will night never come?" suggests that they are in the state of prolonged twilight. As night delays to come, Godot's arrival is also differed. The setting at the time of twilight can be interpreted as an in between space of this world and the after world. This twilight is the threshold. Thus, Godot may symbolise death. After crossing the threshold, the two characters may meet the death or the Godot.

On the other hand, the poetic persona in *Gitanjali* continuously talks about the spending of the whole day, and the impending night. He/she anticipates the arrival of the God in the dark of night. This time also, the arrival of God can be interpreted as the arrival of death. In Song no 90 of *Gitanjali*, the speaker says that the death will knock at his/her door at the close of the day.

In both of the texts the characters long for the falling of night as it is time when God/Godot will meet them. And their lives will find a new purpose with the beginning of a new morning. A new life will begin after the meeting with the God/Godot.

4. Comparative Interpretive Frameworks and Lexical Parallels

4.1 Characterisation

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett are often described as absurd and deliberately stripped of conventional psychological depth. Their lack of background, identity, or clear purpose makes them appear less like traditional dramatic characters and more like symbolic figures representing the condition of human existence. They are presented without any background or reference, devoid of inner conflicts and emotional responses. As Martin Esslin comments— "…if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets." (Esslin, 2008).

The plot of *Waiting for Godot* develops through the speech and activities of two tramps—Vladimir and Estragon. There are another pair—Lucky and Pozzo. Godot is not a real character, but rather a symbolical manifestation of human longing and waiting for something or someone. One of the suggestions about the etymology for Godot's name is that Godot is a weakened form of the word "God". (Esslin, 2008). "Godot has subsequently been explained as God, a diminutive god, Love, Death, Silence, Hope, De Gaulle, Pozzo, a Balzac character, a bicycle racer, Time Future, a Paris street for call girls…" (Cohn, 2008). The identity of the two tramps is also not disclosed. As hinted in the plot, the two tramps do not have any root. They know nobody, nobody knows them. They are uncertain about everything. Even they are not sure of their own existence. Vladimir is one with the hope, Estragon is the one with the complaints. Though, Vladimir stands for pessimism, even he is also sceptical. He cannot rely on Godot's promise to come as he says: "He didn't say for sure he'd come." Whenever Estragon asks him something about Godot, he fails to provide any satisfactory answer. He is not fully convinced of anything regarding Godot.

In *Gitanjali,* two characters are introduced. One is the speaker and another one is the God. Though God is not physically present in those songs of *Gitanjali*, the speaker's every word is addressed to him. Not being physically present, His presence predominates throughout those poems. There are two voices within the speaker, one is who is always in hope, another one is sometimes disappointed and complaining. In Song no.41 and 47, respectively, the poetic voice considers the hope to meet the God a "vain longing" and affirms that: "The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain.' But whatever happens, the speaker is never sceptical about anything associated to the God.

4.2 Faith vs. Spirituality

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* frequently display skepticism toward religion and divine authority. Their dialogue reveals a fragmented understanding of faith, reflecting the broader existential uncertainty that defines Beckett's dramatic universe. Even they consider the Believers to be ignorant as Estragon calls them who believes in the story of the Saviour the "bloody ignorant apes". They raise question against the Christian belief of salvation. The story of Bible cannot convince them. They comment on the story of saving of life of two thieves by the Saviour by saying "a reasonable percentage". They cannot rely on the story and consider the percentage. Holy belief turns into a matter of materialistic profit and loss. What every religion demands that is the complete faith without any dilemma lacks in the characters of the play.

In *Gitanjali*, Faith is everything as the base of the relationship between the speaker and the God. The speaker is never doubtful about the existence of God. Even, the very opening line of *Gitanjali* reflects the inner harmony that the poet has experienced: "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life." (Song 1). Man is a frail vessel, a breakable being, and he is a little being, but he is endowed with endless, everlasting life as God continues to pour his blessings on man, and God's gifts are in such bounty that it never exhausted. Tagore here conveys the theory of renewal of life; human life may end in emptiness, but if it is God's pleasure, then God will impart life again into person's life, and renew it. There is a vital truth about God in the theological belief. We can't define Him and His love in words. We need a pure, devoted heart to understand Him. The heart of the human being can only grasp the reality behind Him (Anjum, 2024). He does not exist in words, but the poet feels Him in the core of his heart or soul. This realization about God has been achieved by the poetic persona in *Gitanjali*. The poetic voice in *Gitanjali* is a devoted soul whose only thought is God. He/She only waits for the union with God. The idea of union, the longing for salvation is conveyed in terms of the beloved waiting for the lover to come and awaken him/her in the darkness of midnight.

4.3 Concept of bond

None of the characters in *Waiting for Godot* are sure of their bonding with the Godot. They wish to have a bond, but whether at all they have or not remains to them as a big question. On the other hand, in *Gitanjali*, the poetic voice does have the faith in his/her bond with the God. So, he/she can easily call Him Lord, Friend, Love, etc. Their relation is much closer. While in Waiting for Godot, for the two tramps, Godot is completely outsider, alien where there is every possibility for them not to recognise Him. The base of the bond in Waiting for Godot is somewhere very obscure. But the poetic voice in Song no. 11 of *Gitanjali* can affirm that: "Our master has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever." There is no doubt in the mind of the speaker regarding the bond with the God.

4.4 Attributes of God or/and Godot

In *Waiting for Godot*, the attributes of Godot remain entirely unknown to Vladimir and Estragon. Their fragmented conversation about him produces uncertainty rather than clarity, reinforcing the mysterious and possibly illusory nature of the awaited figure. They are sure about nothing regarding Godot. Even their conversation makes the audience doubtful of whether any of them at all ever saw Godot or talked to Him. As Estragon confesses, they will even not be able to recognise Godot even if they see them. That is all what they know about Godot.

On the other hand, in *Gitanjali* the poetic voice can feel everything associated with the God. Though his/her meeting with the God is continuously differed, he/she is familiar with almost everything associated with the God. He/she can feel the sound of silent footsteps and the rolling wheel of God's Chariot, can smell the heavenly fragrance, can also recognise the glimpse of ecclesiastical light. As in Song no. 41, the poetic voice claims: "In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy message has come within my heart and called me in secret……/…… and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence." The devoted soul of the speaker can reach that much.

4.5 Medium to reach the God/ Godot

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* are completely clueless about everything associated with Godot. The way in which they can reach to Godot is unknown to them. The two tramps cannot find any medium to reach to God. They have neither the faith nor that devoted soul which can bring them close to Godot. They are doubtful of everything about Godot.

On the other hand, the deep faith in the devoted soul of the speaker in *Gitanjali* makes it possible for him/her to feel heavenly signals. He/she dedicates his/her song for the God, and it is through the offering of his/her songs the speaker tries to reach to the God. The speaker believes that the song offerings will be the medium to go to the level of the God and to meet Him.

4.6 Promise of God versus Promise of Godot

In *Gitanjali*, the poetic voice can fully rely on the promise made by the God. His/her faith is that much strong. He/she never doubt the promise of God. Sometimes, he/she may get disappointed, but it does not weaken his/her faith towards the God.

On the other hand, the two tramps in *Waiting for Godot* are not much clear about the promise of Godot. What Godot has promised remains something obscure before them as Vladimir confesses that Godot has promised that "he'd see". None of them can rely on the promise made by Godot and they become more sceptical as the meeting is continuously deferred.

4.7 Uncertainty

In *Waiting for Godot*, uncertainty is the dominant condition shaping Vladimir and Estragon's existence. They are unsure of their prayer, the promise received, the nature of their bond with Godot, and even Godot's identity. Their dialogue repeatedly exposes this vagueness— "Nothing is certain," Estragon remarks, capturing the existential suspension that defines the play. Time itself becomes unstable ("He said Saturday… I think"), and the tramps cannot confirm whether they have ever met Godot at all. This pervasive ambiguity reflects Beckett's absurdist worldview, where meaning, salvation, and identity remain perpetually deferred. The seed of Godot is Luke's account of crucifixion, as summarized by St. Augustine: "Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the

thieves was damned." (Cohn, 2008).

In *Gitanjali*, uncertainty is present but transformed into a spiritual mode of longing. The speaker often expresses feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, or not knowing the divine will. However, unlike Beckett's stagnation, this uncertainty becomes a pathway to inner awakening; doubt encourages humility and deepens devotional awareness. The speaker's questions—about divine timing, grace, and presence—do not negate faith but intensify it. Here, uncertainty is not existential paralysis but spiritual preparation.

Thus, while both texts employ uncertainty as a central lexical force, its function diverges sharply: Beckett uses uncertainty to reveal existential void and absurdity (Hutchings, 1991), whereas Tagore transforms uncertainty into a vehicle for spiritual growth and surrender.

5. Identity of God and Godot

Within theological discourse, God is often regarded as a reality that transcends linguistic definition. Human language, therefore, remains insufficient to fully articulate the nature of divine love or presence. We can't define Him and His love in words. We need a pure, devoted heart to understand Him. The heart of the human being can only grasp the reality behind Him. He does not exist in words but the poet feels Him in the core of his heart or soul. This realization about God has been achieved by the poetic persona in *Gitanjali*. The poetic voice in *Gitanjali* is a devoted soul whose only thought is God. He/ She only waits for the union with God. The idea of union, the longing for salvation is conveyed in terms of the beloved waiting for the lover to come and awaken him/her in the darkness of midnight. But when people ask the speaker the meaning of those songs which he/she dedicates to the God, he/she remains silent as nothing about the God or his love can be expressed in words. The God cannot be defined with any earthly measures.

But in the case of Waiting for Godot, the situation is completely reversed. Vladimir and Estragon attempt to define Godot through ordinary social categories such as "home," "family," "friends," "agents," and even "bank accounts." This attempt to describe Godot through mundane references only deepens the ambiguity surrounding his identity. Unlike *Gitanjali*'s God, for the two tramps, Godot is someone who can be associated with worldly things. Basically, the two tramps are trying to contain Godot in the sphere of their known world. They are unable to think beyond the world which surrounds them. Besides their effort to contain Godot, the identity of Godot remains unknown. Even the playwright is also unaware of who or what Godot is. When Alan Schneider, who was to direct the first American production of *Waiting for Godot,* asked Beckett who or what was meant by Godot, he received the answer, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play". (Esslin, 2008)

6. Difference of Attitude towards God in the two texts

Though there might be found similarity in a number of lexical items in the two texts, the attitudes of them are completely different. The perspectives represented in the two works reflect two contrasting intellectual traditions: Western existential modernism in Beckett and spiritual devotionalism in the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore (Sacide, 2025). While one stands for spirituality, the other stands for cynicism. In *Gitanjali,* on the one hand, there is the quest for the God and on the other hand, there is the realisation of the God. And for this realization a devoted pious soul is needed and the speaker possesses it. In opposition, in *Waiting for Godot*, there is only the quest, not the realization. And neither of the character has a devoted soul to realize the truth about Godot. The poet of Gitanjali tries to establish the truth of the harmony of the God. For him, God exists in every single entity of the universe, and He fills everything with his benevolence. One can easily meet the God if he/she possesses a pious soul and this meeting is only possible when a spiritual bond is created between the person and the God.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the shared lexical items—particularly *waiting*, *hope*, *nothingness*, and *recognition*—reveals that although both *Waiting for Godot* and *Gitanjali* employ similar vocabulary, they use it to express fundamentally different worldviews. In *Gitanjali*, waiting is a devotional practice grounded in trust; the speaker is confident that the divine presence will eventually respond, bless, and transform the seeker. Waiting becomes an act of spiritual preparation that leads toward fulfilment. In *Waiting for Godot*, however, waiting becomes an endless cycle of deferral. Godot's promised arrival never occurs, turning waiting into a symbol of human futility and the unreachability of meaning. The same lexical elements that express spiritual certainty in Tagore—promise, hope, bond, blessing—express existential void and frustration in Beckett.

Thus, while the two texts share notable lexical resonances, their pragmatic force diverges sharply. Tagore's

language gestures toward spiritual plenitude and divine intimacy, whereas Beckett's reinforces cynicism, uncertainty, and metaphysical suspension. The comparison shows that similar words can encode radically different philosophical orientations, revealing how language shapes each author's vision of human existence and transcendence.

Acknowledgement

The author gratefully acknowledges the insightful comments and constructive suggestions provided by the Editor and the anonymous reviewers of the *Journal of Literature Advances*, which greatly helped in improving the overall quality of the paper. The completion of this research work would not have been possible without the help and inspiration from my husband Md Sadikur Rahman to whom I owe my heartful gratitude. A heartful gratitude to Almighty Allah who kept me sound, physically and mentally, during the accomplishment of this project.

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