International Journal of Research in English

ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.36
IJRE 2025; 7(2): 463-471
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 07-06-2025
Accepted: 09-07-2025

Bhagwati Prasad
Assistant Professor of English, R.M. College, Saharsa, Bihar, India

Corresponding Author:
Bhagwati Prasad
Assistant Professor of English, R.M. College, Saharsa, Bihar, India

Eastern absurd plays, human chord: Rajeshwar Prasad's pioneering stage

Bhagwati Prasad

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2025.v7.i2g.505

Abstract
Rajeshwar Prasad effects a significant transformation of Absurdist Theatre, advancing further than the stage of reading or interpretation. His plays utilise radical economy, pioneering the Absurdist formula of the Theatre of the Absurd - (aclp2t) + (afi2lms) + (tc) to present us with the full emotional impact of communicating an existentially stagnant angst by turning it into a story that is implicitly profoundly human. As a pioneering voice, Prasad has brought Absurdism onto the stage, moving beyond sterile thought to comprise those things that represent the most vivid and unforgettable human aspects of vulnerability and the raw quest to find meaning in a world that appears indifferent.

Keywords: Absurdism, east and west, life, existentialism, nihilism

Introduction
In the broad and sometimes unsettling realm of contemporary drama, movements that have exploited the raw, unsettling cadence of human fear, as had the French Theatre of the Absurd. Emerging from the ruination of two World Wars and confronted by the emptiness of a world without God, the genre conjured its voice from the fractured narratives, nonsensical exchanges, and naked existential angst rendered by Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and Albee. Even within that bright constellation, voices that can both honour the tradition while offering authenticity - like a sudden chord that makes us stop and listen - are hard to find. D Heiney and L.H. Downs 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. It was a part of general anti-literary movement of our time [...] largely because Samuel Beckett wrote importantly in both areas [1].

Rajeshwar Prasad doesn't just interpret the Theatre of the Absurd - he reshapes it, capturing its essence and transforming it into something potent, clear, and deeply human, like a sharp spotlight cutting through stage darkness. With a rare economy of means that still strikes with full emotional and intellectual force - like a single sharp note hanging in the air - his work keeps him squarely among the leading voices in contemporary absurdist theatre.

Prasad deftly works the absurdist formula of $(aclp^2t) + (afi^2lms) + (tc)$ to sharpen the themes - action shrinks, characters thin out, language pares down, plot narrows, place fades, and time hangs in a hazy blur. With the setting frozen in place, movement kept to a minimum, and no familiar plot unfolding, the audience is pushed to explore the characters' inner worlds - like studying shifting clouds in a still, grey sky. What sets Prasad's work apart - what makes it unforgettable - is its ability to hit us in the chest with raw emotion, not just tease the mind with clever ideas. Prasad's seven plays don't just show alienation, fear, isolation, insecurity, loneliness, mystery, and suspense - they make us feel them, like a cold draft slipping under a closed door. Everything about Alvin radiates those feelings, his tall frame standing like a shadow left behind. But it's the sudden, brutal news Cecil hears - a terse bulletin about his whole family killed in a car crash - that hurls the play into a shocking depth of tragic absurdity. Ramsurat rightly explores in his article:

> 'This particular intention, as is indicated by Prasad - somewhat daringly - refers to as the 'absurdist formula': $(aclp^2t) + (afi^2lms) + (tc)$, or action, character and plot with a reduction in the latter three, accompanied by greater feelings of alienation, fear, isolation, insecurity, loneliness, mystery and suspense interspersed with tragicomic instances [2].'

In world theatre's history, few forms shake our sense of reality with the bold, eerie beauty of the Theatre of the Absurd like laughter echoing in an empty room. Rising from the ashes of post-war unease, it spoke aloud the chilling silence of a universe stripped of meaning, a barren plain where human effort so often ends in dust. Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Harold Pinter shaped the stage with their strange, haunting stories, yet into that world stepped a voice just as vital and utterly its own - Rajeshwar Prasad, speaking with the closeness of a whisper and the precision of a blade. His absurdist plays don't just nod to tradition - they stand alone, vivid as freshly painted canvases, steeped in a warm, human pathos that marks them as bold explorations of what it means to be human. Ramsurat explores in his article:

'Besides, Prasad unflinchingly points out how various power structures - functioning through bureaucratic inefficiency, political corruption, and mass foolishness - perpetuate such absurdity. A feeling of intense loss of individual identity within the collective forms the crux of Prasad's works [3].

'The Travellers': Tapestry of the Real Show of Life

With his sharp, unflinching look at human futility, Rajeshwar Prasad stands out as that rare voice - a pioneer whose seven absurd plays in the East, like the haunting and gut-punching 'The Travellers', aren't imitations but proof of his singular vision and masterful command of the craft. 'The Travellers', a play in three acts, embodies this unique ability to depict the absurdity of life with such clarity that it is disconcerting and undeniably important. The play opens with Cecil and Blair - two men who look as ordinary as we can get - who sit on a cold concrete bench at a deserted railway platform awaiting the arrival of a train that does not arrive on time. The setting feels like a classic absurdist trope, calling to mind Beckett's tramps hunched on a bare roadside, keeping a tireless watch for meaning - or some long-promised event - that might never come. It starts with talk of 'homely issues' and the sting of December's wind, but soon pulls apart into a small world that reveals humanity's contradictions and quiet despair. Ramsurat rightly observes:

> 'The play's attempts at absurdity, broken communication, and existential themes develop into nonsense dialogues and shallow explorations of meaning, such as Alvin's spontaneous death expeditions [4].'

Cecil, the managing director, appears content with his wife and kids, a polished front that mirrors society's idea of success. Alvin couldn't be more different - he's pure, unfiltered existential angst: broke, single, sleeping on park benches, 'divorced by his parents', just drifting from one street corner to the next. Blair, the third character, stumbles through events like a bewildered witness, reflecting every spike of tension as if holding up a trembling mirror. By stripping the cast down to just a few figures, the story zeroes in on the timeless human struggles they embody, and every glance or clipped word between them lands with a universal weight. The dramatist writes:

'Blair: We witness winter after the rainy season - spring after winter, and summer after spring [5].'

The dialogue also shows Prasad's masterful grip on absurdist language, sharp as a sudden laugh in a silent room. It swings from small, everyday matters - like talk of drafty rooms - to questions that cut deep into philosophy. Alvin's atheistic-existentialist song, '*Man Is a Traveller Who Comes and Goes*, pulses at the heart of the play, laying bare life's brief, drifting passage - like wind slipping through an open door. Alvin resists at first, but Cecil pushes, and the blunt philosophical statement cracks the scene wide open, turning the quiet shuffle of waiting into a sharp encounter with life's deepest questions. What followed was a slide into absurd aggression - Alvin waving a knife, bodies shoving over a seat that lay bare how reason collapsed and raw, instinctive chaos waited just beneath the skin of human interaction. The dramatist says:

> 'Alvin: What will you do? Look at my pocket. Do you see it? See a new and edgy knife [6].'

This sudden, quiet disaster feels like pure genius, the kind that hits like a match flaring in the dark. Cecil's sense of contentment shatters in a heartbeat, leaving yesterday's quiet smile twisting into something painfully ironic. His harsh sobs, set against Blair's fumbling to soothe him, lay bare how fragile joy can be and how easily life deals out its senseless blows. According to absurdist philosophy, a world stripped of God and joy stands exposed in this one sharp, shattering moment. Cecil no longer gives a hoot about the seat or the bags that he had previously fought over, and sneakily makes the larger point of how meaningless possessions become when real loss fills the void, like dust after a storm. In the scene, the petty scuffles of mundane human beings, like two neighbours arguing about the fence dividing them, transpire under the flickering silhouette of a massive, senseless tragedy yelling, 'swallow me whole'.

The culmination arrives like a fever dream, a cold deluge of a fever in which absurdity floods into its most nightmarish shape, overwhelming the senses. After the long-delayed train is finally announced, Alvin mutters that the seat 'isn't good and is for aliens', then, saying he's leaving 'for his permanent home', he hops down onto the cold steel of the railway track. His suicide is not portrayed as an affective event; it is considered the logical end of his own atheistic, existential journey, the last phase of a road he had travelled for years. In a nihilistic world devoid of meaning, he spontaneously chooses the timing of his own death, literally slamming the door on. Cecil and Blair bolt without bags, abandoning their bags, in a rush to avoid being arrested, which adds an absurd element to the scene. When they realise they are fleeing for their lives, they leave behind the things they had previously fought over - a rusty watch, a crumpled map, until all ambition has collapsed into a heaving, left-an-empty-soul extravaganza. The play ends not easily and comfortably, but with the ghosts of flight as lingering questions, evaporating without resolution, leaving the audience bereft in the dark, burdened by the unsettling hold of what was just witnessed. The dramatist says:

> 'Blair: Cecil! Escape from here as soon as we can, leaving all this because the policemen are coming [7].'

Rajeshwar Prasad is not just foregrounding a repeat of what has come before - he takes the familiar themes, over-determination, and infuses them with raw urgencies, pulling them into an exact and powerful story that preserves the freshness of thunder behind it. In his plays, including 'The

Travellers', are not sterile thought experiments in despair - they live with humanity, tracking the raw realities of vulnerability, grief, and trolling for meaning in a world that remains visible but so often disinterested. Simply stated, the brilliance of his genius lies in the manner in which he lays bare a simple story that then becomes heavy with the experience of human trauma and the stark, venomous freedom to choose.

'The Tribute': Paradox and Profundity

In the nearly seventy years of modern drama, the Theatre of the Absurd occupies a sizeable territory, addressing how humanity works in restlessness against the silent void and uncomfortable absence of meaning. The pioneering manoeuvres of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and Albee were through gashes deep in form, revealing the sharp and uneasy rhythm of the world lived, and post-war. In their distinguished company, we land, a voice from the chorus - Rajeshwar Prasad's - who carries the same existential chill, although sharpened with an objectivity that is rare, and a force that is clear-eyed, the kind that can leave us still, unsure and breathless for its originality and profundity. In his play 'The Tribute', Prasad doesn't just join the absurdist tradition - he twists it into something new, sharp, and entirely his own, the way a sudden chord can jolt us upright, marking him as a pioneer whose insight carries a rare, deeply human force. Ramsurat rightly observes:

> 'While not going far from the Absurdism that the developed cultures had promoted and that, in reality, created the human being, Prasad was able to bring a new form of artistic expression and storytelling with the use of indigenous techniques. He thereby succeeded in laying bare the very essence of human endeavour utterly [8].'

'The Tribute' is a three-act philosophic play that submerges its audience into the abyss of the absurd, peeling back the layers upon layers of societal façades until all that remains is a bare, uncompromised reality of human futility. It looks like nothing special - a small reception cabin in London, the kind where the hum of a kettle fills the quiet as we wait for a seminar - but inside this unremarkable room, Prasad sets the stage for a fierce collision of beliefs and the slow, shattering collapse of illusion. We meet Harry, the very image of existential despair, tossing out lines like 'unhappiness is inherited by birth and 'death is the only disease', each one slicing clean through the soft wallpaper of polite optimism. Frank, once the picture of success and ease, becomes his tragic counterpoint when a market crash and an arrest warrant smash his happiness like glass underfoot. The dramatist writes:

> 'Frank: A non-bailable 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 loan defaulters [9].'

Prasad's absurdist framework isn't just a checklist; it's a finely tuned blueprint built to hit with real dramatic force, like a stage light snapping on at the perfect moment. In 'The Tribute', the trimming isn't just simplification - it's a careful distillation that sharpens the play's themes until they ring like a struck bell. Not much happens - everyone just waits for the Chief Guest, who never shows up, leaving the tea to go cold. This 'waiting' isn't just a plot device - it's a sharp metaphor for humanity's endless, often fruitless search for meaning or salvation, like standing at a deserted station long after the last train's gone. Harry and Frank feel less like people and more like walking arguments, their conversations clashing like steel as ideas, not lives, drive the story forward. Frank's abrupt change in fortune - sharp as a door slamming - shows just how fragile worldly success can be, robbing him of control and turning him into a symbol of vulnerability we all share. The language, which is rife with philosophical disputations, always circles back around to the same unhappy ending - like footsteps reverberating in a narrow policy hallway - driving home how futile engagement is in regard to an indomitable fate. The story never travels a typical narrative arc but always unwinds from dramatic instances or ruptures of 'Aha!' moments, which amplify the absurdity like pulling a rubber chicken from a locked briefcase. The reception cabin in the Central Hall is a true expression of constricted walls and a high, echoing ceiling, indicating the constriction of human experience, drawing both the characters and the audience into the same trap of inevitability. This deliberate scaling back doesn't weaken the play - it sharpens it, so every line and even the quiet pause of a held breath feels heavy with existential weight. The dramatist writes:

> 'Frank: I don't understand your ideas and your state and status as a man.
> Harry: You're right. You cannot know the harsh realities of life and the world. All people don't understand this and they meet the same - a state of absurdity [10].'

Prasad moves through this landscape with a steady, unblinking gaze - sharp in its logic yet warm enough to notice the faint tremor in a stranger's voice. Harry sees the world as empty at its core, and that leaves him feeling cut off from it. His sharp, almost bitter remarks - like calling kindness a painted mask - serve as armour against believing in hope that isn't real. Frank's sharp plunge - from 'top ten in the world' to broke and staring down an arrest - shakes more than just his own confidence; it rattles the audience too, like a sudden crack running through glass they thought was unbreakable. Everyone's eager wait for Well turns to shock at the news of his death, and the air seems to thicken with mystery and unease, building toward a grotesque scene that drives home how little control we have over life's random turns. A steady but sensitive hand weaves this emotional tapestry, so even as the story settles on grim philosophical truths, the audience stays hooked on the raw, human struggle playing out before their eyes. The dramatist writes:

> 'Elmer: It is a matter of deep distress that our chief guest Well is no more in this world. He has been killed in a helicopter accident due to an engine malfunction [11].'

What really lifts 'The Tribute' into rare territory - and cements Prasad's place as a trailblazer - is the way he shapes the tragic-comic with a steady, almost playful hand, while holding fast to his bold, atheistic-existentialist vision.

The seminar's show of purpose, the careful staging for an honoured guest, and then the jarring, almost absurdly gory news of Well's death - his body 'dispersed into hundreds of parts', like shards scattered across a cold floor - make for a master class in tragicomedy. It's more than dark humour - it's a jolt, like hearing glass crack in a silent room, forcing us to face how fragile our creations are against the universe's cold indifference. The long-hoped-for source of wisdom and inspiration doesn't just fail to appear, like in Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot'- he's been torn apart, his body shattered into unrecognisable pieces. Here's the key difference: Prasad stretches absurdity from the taut silence of waiting to the raw terror of sudden, senseless destruction - a leap that feels far more final and gut-deep than simple absence.

Prasad embraces an atheistic-existentialist worldview with clarity and conviction that rings like an old temple bell yet cuts as sharply as today's headlines. Harry's claim that 'man has come to this world only to lose, not to gain', along with his view of medical science as merely 'a delusion to delay death', reads less like casual cynicism and more like a deliberate, unsettling philosophy - sharp as cold steel in the dark. Prasad tears away every comforting illusion, revealing a world where death levels both loss and gain, where joy flickers like a match in the wind, and even the brightest lives can crumble without warning. Prasad's gift for blending sharp, thoughtful debate with gripping theatre shines here, where the play's fierce arguments crash against moments as tense as a held breath backstage. The dramatist says:

> 'Harry: Life is meaningless. Everything is meaningless [12].

Rajeshwar Prasad's 'The Tribute' doesn't just tip its hat to the Theatre of the Absurd - it pushes it forward, sharp as a spotlight cutting through the dark. He takes familiar tropes and hones them with near-forensic precision, dissecting the human condition with a candid honesty that stings as much as it delights. He is not lamenting his 'Godlessness and joylessness', he is simply performing it, like a skeleton tree in winter. He exhibits it so honestly as a form of artistry that it replaces morose melancholy with an inward journey. The humanity of the play comes from not shying away from hard truths, its in-depth exploration of the complicated mess of our delusions and fortitude up against the cold, silent stretch of the cosmos. Prasad's work is overflowing with power and depth; it is a landmark moment both in world drama and not just the mark of a master, it characterises a true innovator; a distinct, singular, vision of the absurd lingers like a bell-toll, placing it in the loftiest esteem for its presence reverberation, width of ideas and depth of thought.

The Wife': A Critical Acclamation of Unique Excellence

In 'The Wife', Prasad's brilliance jumps out in the way he works the absurdist formula - like a chef folding sharp spice into a slow-simmering stew. This formula distils the play's structure and themes with sharp precision, stripping away every theatrical ornament - like scenery fading into shadow - to heighten the deliberate sense of meaninglessness. Everything boils down to one lonely, doomed struggle; only a handful of characters appear, more symbols than flesh and blood; the words circle back on themselves, as if speech is fraying; the plot moves sparingly, never building to a clear end; and it all unfolds in the cold, neutral space of a hotel reception desk. By stripping things back, it doesn't shrink the drama - it sharpens it, like sunlight concentrated through a magnifying glass. Weston's weary acceptance of a godless, joyless world clashes with Carter's fierce faith in divine order and a life that matters, and that clash becomes the real drama - until the fight dissolves into the absurd sight of both men shouting over the din of rattling chairs.

The dramatist writes

> 'HELENA: I wish you a happy return to your home.
> CARTER: Heartily thanks uncle! Thanks Helena. Thanks for leaving me alone [13].'

The absurd is structured by permanence - frets, fears and alienation, as well as that dull, unrelenting cadence of anxiety, each person essentially cut off, alone, in a mystery and land of supposition and fear. With all that in mind, Weston has put the forms of a with Carter for the first time, and there is an odd, dead air about it when they meet. Their exchange is sharp, and full of ideas, but does indicate how isolated each brain can be in the context of this world of supposition and distribution in which one is not work politics and/or legal absences limiting the business of learning about anything even remotely resembling concrete truth. When Helena - the so-called 'Wife - steps onto the scene, the story's main conflict sparks to life, though its roots remain wrapped in shadow. Who is she, really? Who's her husband? As Carter and Robert argue, her perplexing lack of response makes her an indeterminate figure - like a face half in shadow - capable of embodying both the impermanence of truth and fluid identity in a nonsensical world. With the mystery unyielding, both the characters and viewers are left suspended in the raw and uncertain ambiguity of limbo. What feels like the final showdown between Carter and Robert unravels into a tragicomic farce - two men brawling over a name no one agrees on, ending side by side, breathless and bleeding, murmuring thanks to God and to each other, a darkly funny and piercing reminder of how pointless our battles can be. The dramatist writes:

> 'WESTON: She is my wife. I've been searching for her for the past three days but couldn't find her. She's cheated me. She has broken all the promises she made to me.
> ROBERT: She's my wife. I have married her and we have promised to live together. None can snatch her. She's mine, not yours [14].'

What lifts Prasad's 'The Wife' into rare brilliance - and secures his place as a trailblazer -isn't only his faithfulness to the absurdist blueprint, but the way he threads sharp philosophy through characters who feel as vivid as a whispered secret in a dark room. Think about Weston - he's 'happy with his life', but only because there's no choice left to him, exiled in that same unchanging state like a man staring at the same four grey walls. This is a remarkably unique take on the absurdist hero. As Beckett's characters continue waiting, and Ionesco's everyman is puzzled, Weston encounters the absurd. His acknowledgement was twisted and of a sharp tone, akin to a jaw clenched against the wind. His happiness is not happiness but an accepted way of living, a quiet surrender that still stands its ground, like a candle holding against the wind. This quiet but pivotal

turn - from the fog of despair or confusion to a cool, deliberate contentment, even if it feels empty - offers a fresh way to face life's lack of meaning, hinting at a deeply human way to stand before the void. It's a powerful reminder of how the human spirit bends without breaking, finding ways to adapt even when the future feels like a barren plain, and proof that in exile, necessity can still hammer out a fragile peace.

On top of that, Helena's careful silence works like a masterstroke - quiet as a held breath -carrying a sharp edge of dramatic subtlety. In a genre crowded with talkative figures and heavy-handed symbols, Helena stands out as a sharp, silent sign that can mean anything. By refusing to side with either man, she sharpens the play's central question - who we are, what we can claim as ours, and whether truth is ever more than smoke in the air. She isn't just sitting there like furniture; her stillness sparks the absurd, pushing the men to face how hollow their claims really are. Prasad's portrayal captures innovation in character with a quiet force - moments where a missing glance says more than a speech, and silence hums with deep, philosophical weight.

In 'The Wife', Rajeshwar Prasad's piece is not just a play that follows the conventions of a genre; it is a piece of theatre that is its own thing, and a form of theatre that is extreme and whole, guided by a vision of his own, much like a stroke with a brush that falls perfectly. He makes an intentional choice toward minimalism - he clearly demonstrates that the troubled anxiety of being human can speak just as loudly with a single line that is precise and well-crafted, as it can with manipulative embellishment. He is great at crafting a drama that appears simple on the surface but rises high above with its sustained intellectual and emotional weight. 'The Wife' stands out as an example of a new dramaturgy that is audience-centred and engaging. They are liable to wrestle with uncomfortable truths about themselves and their existence, making them co-conspirators in the play's larger existential questions, which are deeply troubling.

'Zero into Four': Unveiling Humanity's Deepest Scars

'Zero into Four', a three-act philosophical drama, turns absurdist minimalism into an art form, weaving its beat until the final moment lands like a hammer on glass. The intensity builds to something simple and quiet, a pivotal moment occupied by two ten-year-old boys, Amol and James, who sit in the shade of the trees, eating warm porridge, as they wipe away tears with their sleeves. They sit in front of a maid and a mother figure. It may seem like a stripped-down space with only two ten-year-old boys, but a silent yet penetrating drama of existential crisis springs to life, like the flicker of a single candle in a room without light. There are not many characters, but all are well defined. Amol, his cheeks streaked with tears, carries a corporeal, primitive grief; James begins relaxed, a brief image of childhood innocence; Tara, the maid, speaks from a well of sorrow she never mentions; and Zara, the mother, moves in the pull of a fate that is already too late to resist. The dialogue between them is easy, yet punctuated with a quiet dread like the heavy air before a storm. The language is stripped to the bone - repetitive, almost like a chant of grief: 'no mother', 'divorced', 'zero into four'. It isn't a weakness, but a distillation that pulls the audience's gaze to the raw, unblinking truths being spoken. The story sheds its usual arcs and keeps circling the theme of abandonment, each turn tightening the grip until it hits a raw, unfinished climax. Confined to almost emblematic spaces - a patch of shade beneath neem and peepal trees, a dim guestroom - the outside world recedes, pulling the characters deep into the stark quiet of their own desolation. By stripping away excess theatrics, the play gathers its force, letting the raw absurdity flare like a sudden match struck in the dark. The dramatist says:

> 'Zara: I love you, my heart-beat - I love you my blood-bit. When the time comes, I will welcome you. Care for yourself. Your father guide you. Your father will look after you.
> James: What? What?...mama?
> Amol: Annihilation...annihilation!' [15]

Beyond its striking architecture, 'Zero into Four' dives deep into the human mind, capturing the chill of alienation, the tight knot of fear, the ache of loneliness, and the quiet pull of mystery and suspense. Amol's first tears fall not only for someone he's lost, but for a deeper break with the world itself - a rift Tara mirrors when she admits she's 'divorced' her own children. The idea of a 'supreme agency' deciding who stays together and who's torn apart - like cutting a wedding ring in half - sends a cold shiver through people, leaving them anxious and unsure. Forced by an unseen decree, Zara leaves with heavy steps, and the children tumble into a cold, echoing loneliness where every desperate plea dies unheard. The enigma of this 'supreme agency', paired with the uncertainty of what lies ahead, leaves the audience unsettled - like hearing a door slam in an empty house - and burdened with a sharp sense of cosmic injustice. These emotions aren't shown as distant ideas - they live in the raw, gut-deep reactions of children: bitter tears streaking their cheeks, hands clutching desperately, bodies twisting on the ground in pain. It turns the play's tragedy into something we don't just think about, we feel it, as if it speaks to every human heart. The dramatist reveals:

> 'James: I will die. My dad will die. How will I live? My mother, don't divorce me...don't leave us...mama...mama [16].'

Prasad's work rises to rare brilliance because he never wavers in portraying the 'mother' as the ultimate sign of cosmic abandonment - a lone figure standing beneath an endless, starless sky. The play declares there's no mother anywhere in the cosmos, insisting the very idea of motherhood is nothing more than a false construct, like a painted backdrop that only looks real from a distance. This marks a sharp break from the usual Absurdist critiques of God or meaning, as Prasad goes straight for the gut - challenging the deep, childlike sense of safety we cling to. Being 'divorced' from one's mother by some supreme agency feels like the universe turning its face away - an intimate, almost physical betrayal, sharper and heavier than simply knowing no divine hand will reach in. 'Man is of 'zero into four', by 'zero into four', and for 'zero into four' is not just a pronouncement of meaninglessness; it's a declaration of utter annihilation, a state where love, connection, and even existence itself are rendered null and void. 'Man is of 'zero into four', by 'zero into four,' and for 'zero into four' isn't just a bleak statement about meaninglessness - it's a verdict of complete erasure, a place

where love, the brush of another's hand, and even the fact of being are wiped away. The last, elegiac line - 'Life is zero into four…' - drifts in from nowhere, its mournful notes carrying the weight of profound philosophical nihilism. The dramatist explores:

'Life is zero into four,
For gaining all woes here,
Moving on thorns' to boo,
Beaten by flowers too [17].'

Rajeshwar Prasad doesn't just echo his Western peers; he threads their ideas with a raw, almost unshakable emptiness, like the chill that lingers after a long winter night, and makes it entirely his. Prasad centres his work on the innocence of childhood, the boundless reach of a mother's love, and the sudden, senseless blows of an unseen force, creating theatre that slips easily across cultural lines. His plays don't simply dissect the absurd - they ache with grief for humanity's lost innocence, speak to the raw wound of separation, and stare unflinchingly at our fragile place in a universe that feels as cold and distant as winter air. Rajeshwar Prasad blends deep philosophical questions with raw, aching emotion, and he does it fearlessly in his exploration of the 'zero into four' reality. His plays are rare gems - brilliant, singular works that leave the editor's heart stirred, like the faint tremor after a struck bell, and speak straight to the human soul.

'Teachers' Day': An Existential Inquiry

In today's sprawling and often bewildering world of drama, only a handful of playwrights dare to take an existing movement, twist its edges, and give it a sharp new pulse - like a sudden chord that startles the air. Rajeshwar Prasad stands out as a true luminary in the Theatre of the Absurd, with contributions that go beyond mere significance; his play 'Teachers' Day', sharp as a bell's chime in a silent hall, is both unique, earns the highest critical praise.

MAX and KIM, two college professors, stand at the centre of the play, their sharp, quick exchanges holding the story together. MAX, who holds a Ph D in 'Man and Divinity', carries the human hunger for meaning in every step, flashing his degrees like banners and standing firm in his belief that knowledge and wisdom hold the world together. He stands for the rational thinker, the one who trusts in systems and the slow gathering of knowledge, like stacking well-worn books on a sturdy shelf. But KIM turns the idea on its head, voicing the play's absurdist heart: literate or not, all stand equal; wisdom and knowledge amount to nothing; and the cold truth remains - this world isn't our home. Their so-called 'one-to-one' session, meant for refined debate, instead shrinks into a tiny stage where humanity wrestles, pointlessly, to pin order onto a sprawling, indifferent universe. Prasad deftly stages this battle of ideas - not to settle it, but to reveal its built-in futility, exposing our need for order like a candle flickering against the vast, indifferent dark. The dramatist reveals:

'Kim: You have only absurd ideas. We are all the same.
Max: We have meaningful ideas. We know and can therefore change the world.
Kim: None can change the world and its systems [18].'

In 'Teachers' Day', the stripped-down action, sparse plot, and limited setting are intentional, sharpening our focus on the characters' inner turmoil - like watching a single candle flicker in a dark room. The stillness of the lecture hall, the sharp focus on spoken exchanges, and the lone 'plot' thread of waiting for the chief guest aren't flaws - they're deliberate choices, as precise as arranging chairs in perfect rows. The confinement heightens both the mental and existential pressure, pulling the audience deep into the characters' inner worlds and the tense, spiralling debate that refuses to let up, like a candle burning low in a closed room. The anticipation for 'KNOW ALL' - a figure symbolising absolute knowledge and fame - builds a sharp, ironic tension, like the hush before a punch line. The fact that he never arrives - and dies out of sight - drives home how small our struggles are, like dust swept away by a careless breeze, and how random life can be.

'Teachers' Day' stirs a powerful mix of feelings, pulling us through moments of alienation, a sudden shiver of fear, the hollow weight of isolation, and the sting of insecurity, all wrapped in loneliness, mystery, and suspense. The gulf in understanding between MAX and KIM pushes them apart, much like humanity drifts from a world that offers no built-in meaning - an empty sky with no answer when we call. The chaos around KNOW ALL's plane - the dead signal, a door that wouldn't budge, the pilot's useless orders, and at last DAR's blunt word of the crash - hits like a cold fist of fear and uncertainty. The disruption from outside shatters the peace in the academy, revealing just how precarious our human order is and how quickly fate can rush in unannounced with a capricious blow. The unvarnished, tragic fate of KNOW ALL, although not made visible, is like a dark cloud thundering towards our characters and audience, wrapping everyone up in a piercing, crushing solitude as bright, full lives are extinguished for no reason at all, like a candle blown out by a sudden gust. The dramatist says:

'Dar: I have got important information. [...] The signal system of his plane has failed. The door has been jammed. Now the plane is flying without any signal... [19]'

There is something about the bittersweet humour of Teachers' Day, like laughter lingering in the stillness after a goodbye. The seminar's lofty dream of exploring 'Man and Divinity' collapses when 'KNOW ALL', the so-called World's Best Teacher and Novel Prize winner, meets a shabby, inglorious end. It's a bitter twist - human brilliance, brought down by something as small as a loose bolt, leaving every accolade and hard-earned insight to scatter like dust in the wind. They postponed the seminar after the fact, wrapping it in a polite pledge to reschedule 'through the proper channel', a neat little bow on the coffin. It's a final, cruel joke that illustrates how we can cling to absolutes and habit when the ground is far from solid. Rajeshwar Prasad's talent is to portray a 'world without God, without joy', in sharp contours, starkly articulated, soaked in atheistic-existentialism, and places him on a spectrum with Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, and Albee. All these writers had certain common themes, but they had a certain tone that was all their own, like taking a well-loved leather jacket and playing with its rough edges. Prasad didn't just repeat their themes - he deconstructed and reconstructed each, through an accessible lens, yet uneasily so - giving it that cool edge. He takes the vast, unsettling weight of the universal existential crisis and pins it to the petty, almost comical red tape of academia - a missing from here, a rubber stamp there - so

the abstract suddenly feels close enough to touch. His play isn't just a critique of human effort - it's a tender, unflinching look at what it means to be alive, from our frantic, sometimes absurd scrambles for meaning to the quiet shock of discovering it may never come. The dramatist explores:

> 'Unfortunately, we have lost communication with KNOW ALL. We do not know when he will arrive [20].'

In 'Teachers' Day', Prasad makes us face the hard truth: knowledge and wisdom, however mighty they seem, can't stand against life's sudden, merciless turns. When the seminar was abruptly cancelled after its most prominent speaker passed away, it was a brutal reminder that every single ambition - however lavish - can swoosh away like chalk in the rain. This is a clear call to engage with the absurdity of life - not in dread, but in a deep, quiet understanding - like a distant bell ringing in desolation. By this amazing creation, Rajeshwar Prasad substantiates his claim of being a creative mind by imparting to us absurdist drama that not only gets the right critical acclaim but also has the enduring warmth of mankind, as if a faraway chuckle. This play is one day going to be compared to those in the list of the greatest of the absurd, which means, it will still be remembered by people's hearts for a long time, which is an indirect acknowledgement of the artist's rare, humane genius, like a warm jacket on a cold winter night.

'Zero Into Nine': Prasad's Masterstroke

In today's theatre, where bold new ideas keep wrestling with time-honoured traditions, Rajeshwar Prasad has arrived like a tremor we can feel in our bones - an artist whose plays reach beyond plot to probe deeply into what it really means to be human. 'Zero into Nine', Prasad cemented his singular place in modern theatre and, with sharp certainty, breathed fresh life into the Theatre of the Absurd, making it feel urgent and alive - like a voice calling from a dimly lit stage.

'Zero Into Nine' unfolds in three acts, a compact stage where Prasad's genius shines like light through a prism. It takes the vast, unsettling questions about life's emptiness and funnels them into something achingly close to home - a quiet dinner table suddenly split by a whispered truth that can't be unsaid. The play brings us SAM, who appears at ease, and JAX, a retired banker, eighty years old, worn down and pushed aside by his own family, like an old coat left on a dusty chair. JAX, a prophet of despair, lays out the play's core idea: 'the world runs on the 'zero into nine' formula, and life means nothing - never on the 'zero plus nine' formula.' The image of multiplying by zero, wiping out even the brightest number, snaps the lofty theory of atheistic existentialism into something we can feel in our gut. This isn't empty showmanship; it's the raw cry of a man cast off by both family and society, clinging to the only kinship left - neighbours who share the same weary absurdity of life, as he says, 'all this is common and their condition is the same.' The dramatist reveals:

> 'Jax: My brother, who has been separated from me for 40 years, told me that I was a lucky number to have been beaten at least once a week [21].'

The play suddenly shifts, peeling back the thin, brittle mask of SAM's so-called happiness. His fourth son, GAY, shows up in the thick of a serious marital crisis with LESB - accused of infidelity and already the mother of a baby, PRE/POST, born just four months after their wedding. The fight that followed - over the child's very legitimacy and, oddly enough, the name on its birth record - pushed the whole affair to a tragicomic peak, like laughter catching in our throat. Sam, once hailed as the 'lord of the family', feels his grip slip; the weight of stubborn, unsolvable troubles leaves his authority in pieces, like a teacup dropped on stone. He's got no answers, no magic formula to fix it. The naming quarrel - PRE versus POST, each clinging to their own sense of 'right' and 'honour' - plays out like absurdist theatre, the kind where we can almost hear the stubborn voices echo in an empty hall, even as the world around them quietly unravels. In the end, LESB sets the child gently in SAM's lap, then disappears - a sharp, searing image of abandonment and the heavy weight of responsibility in a world that offers no easy answers. The dramatist explores:

'Gay: Greater and greater problems we have. I have named him Pre and she has named him Post. The officer says that there will be only one name for one child. Never two names in any situation. Both parents must agree [22].'

Prasad's drama throws us into the weird, echoing anatomy of the absurd, with every spin of feeling represented like a variance of light moving across a cracked mirror. It pulses with alienation and fear, retaining the cold for the isolation, the ache of being alone in emptiness, at the haunts of mystery and suspense. JAX struggles, GAY clings to hope with white-knuckled hands, and SAM can't move at all - each carries a different face of human pain in a world stripped of comfort or reason. Scenes that swing between absurdity and sorrow - like the petty squabble over a name set against the heavy shadow of illegitimacy - show Prasad's sharp grasp of how humour can deepen, not dilute, the tragic. His world is truly 'without God and joy', grounded in atheist-existential thought, yet it thrums with a fierce, if shadowed, humanism that presses hard on the question of where we're all headed. The dramatist reveals:

> 'Gay: I will shoot you all. I will die and let none live. It is better to die if all are the same.
> Jax: Oh! Oh! All are under 'zero into nine' [23].

Rajeshwar Prasad's pioneering spirit shows not only in his embrace of the absurd but in the way he blends its ideas and puts them to work, like weaving bright threads into a single bold tapestry. He pulls the weight of European existentialism down to earth, setting it in a modern world we can feel - lonely apartment corridors, forgotten elders, families splintering, honour fading, and the cold, faceless hum of city life that could be anywhere. His characters might be archetypes, but they still have the raw humanity that we can sense with our whole body, which they cut through the fog of abstraction very effectively. With 'Zero into Nine', Prasad doesn't hesitate to look directly at the void of human nonsense - he doesn't retreat, nor does he give the darkness any gentler contours - and through that brutal, nearly dazzling truth, he makes the claim of being an exceptionally brave and insightful thinker. He hasn't just created an absurd play. He has constructed an experience, sharp and unsettling, which stays like the echo of footsteps in an empty corridor, a lasting testament to the power of theatre, which is to confront our worst fears.

'Zero and the Plus': Prasad's Absurdist Magnum Opus

'Zero into Plus' plunges its audience headfirst into the vortex of human existential dread. The play hurls its readers straight into the swirling dark of human existential dread.

Amid the solemn rituals of Alietland's yearly religious festivals - where the Aliet Charitable Trust ladles out steaming rice and offers cots to weary travellers - Prasad paints a vivid scene that lays bare the stark emptiness of existence. Bathed in the promise of spiritual comfort and warm communal ties, this setting stands in sharp, almost mocking contrast to the characters' deep sense of emptiness, stripping away any easy belief in built-in purpose or a guiding hand.

Prasad's brilliance shines brightest in his characters - not just as distinct people, but as living archetypes of humanity's many divergent paths toward the same quiet confrontation with the void. We meet JAY, the trust's patron, his eyes flat and distant, carrying the weight of pure nihilistic disillusionment. For JAY, charity means nothing; every human effort is a dead end, as if he's stuck in a sealed loop where God never comes, and the air is dry with a cold, loveless persecution. Losing his wife and never having children left him with a bleak view of life, the kind that stands apart from everything and everyone, like a man watching the world through cold glass - an unfiltered glimpse of despair at its rawest. The dramatist says:

> 'Ray: What happened? Listen to the news bulletin.
> Jay: Annihilation! All are lost. All is gone [24].'

In sharp contrast is RAY - the true good Samaritan - whose steady faith in God and deep belief in every person's value drive him to give generously, year after year, like the time he quietly covered a family's winter heating bill. With several millionaire children to his name, RAY lives a life that feels steeped in purpose and touched by divine favour, like sunlight spilling through stained glass. He stands as the bright signal of familiar hope and faith, the steady belief that this world was truly made for us - like a lamp burning in a window on a dark night. At first, JAY's despair and RAY's faith stand like two unmovable pillars at the heart of the play, until DON walks in and unsettles everything. Don, a pilgrim who boldly calls himself a robber and a killer in front of everyone, lives far beyond the reach of any moral code. Still, he takes a twisted sort of pleasure in what he does, even bragging that he 'gives back' by slipping stolen bills to the police so they'll turn a blind eye. DON is the play's inner sceptic brought to life, the one who cracks open the safe shell of comfort and makes us face the raw, unsettling truth that meaning - even in the darkest acts - can be claimed for oneself. The dramatist explores:

> '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 [25].'

The finely constructed world of faith and reason instantly collapses like glass splintering under sudden pressure. After deadly bombs killed tens of thousands of religious pilgrims, the city is cloistered in a full curfew, locked down and silent, with empty streets and light smoke flowing throughout. The crisis hits its shattering peak when Ray discovers his whole family is gone, the Hotel Aliet hallway still echoing with silence. This news rips through RAY's carefully built world, splintering the beliefs and meanings he's lived by, and hurling him into a grief so raw it feels like the hollow thud after glass shatters on stone. It's a moment of raw human exposure, a quiet scene that shows Prasad's deep, almost tender grasp of how easily belief can crack.

The play's ending lingers in memory, anchored by the haunting line, 'Life is 0 into +'. The words don't just speak about existence - they accuse both emptiness and fullness, like a final whisper admitting life's inescapable paradox. JAY and RAY die in an instant, and DON slips away without a trace - a flat, final moment that feels like the purest expression of emptiness.

'Zero into Plus' is not merely an excellent piece of absurd theatre; it is a master class in the genre, adhering to every standard while simultaneously expanding them. 'Zero into Plus' isn't just a sharp example of absurd theatre - it's a master class in the form, meeting every standard while stretching them into unexpected shapes. Ultimately, the plot is simplistic and clean. The characters - drawn superficially as exaggerated features - never feel flat. Even as embodiments of the perennial fight each of us faces, we feel their weight. The characters' dialogue came round on itself as they switched between their opposing world-views, reflecting light like pieces of glass. The very structure of the play is infused with its message, depicting a godless world seen through the haze of unclouded misery. The dramatist writes:

> 'Life is zero into plus' show... [26]'

Rajeshwar Prasad isn't only a playwright - he's a theatrical philosopher who, in 'Zero into Plus', has shaped a piece brimming with rare depth and the kind of courage we feel like a sudden intake of cold air. He tackles the deepest questions of existence with raw, unflinching honesty, yet keeps a humane touch that echoes our shared fears - like the quiet dread before an empty stage - securing his place as a true pioneer of the Theatre of the Absurd. His work stands apart - brilliant in its own right - and proves how theatre can pierce the heart instead of soothing it, like a bright light cutting through fog. This play will almost certainly sweep up awards, win over the editor's heart, and carve its place in theatre history - a towering triumph that lingers like the echo of a final curtain call.

Conclusion

Rajeshwar Prasad is not only an actor who performs the works of the Absurdist Theatre; he is the theatre itself in its very essence, the one who transforms the cold and nihilistic thoughts into the touching and empathetic works of art. He was not simply one of those actors who, through their interpretation, bring the absurd world to life; he did it with such force that the genre was able to move beyond the mere intellectual reflection and to an immediate, emotional experience. The theatrical combination creates an absolute stasis of existential anguish, which is then paradoxically able to be broken down to a level of emotional catharsis; thus, the audience, who are typically more comprehensively cerebral affected, can be imbibe with pure visceral impact. By the genius of Prasad, the very torment of the void becomes narrative implicitly human, one that makes the audience feel the resonance of it on a very basic level. Ramsurat, in his article, rightly observes:

'Prasad, through his writings, points out the main problems that all deal with modernisation, high corruption rate, and moving away from ancient values feel strongly regardless of their age [27].'

Prasad took the concept and broke the mould, which by now was well-established, and made it so that the absurd is not only noisily discussed but also visibly portrayed on the stage

at the same time, thus putting it in direct confrontation with the audience. Prasad achieves such results by removing all the distances that separate the viewers from the despair or the joy; to be more specific, he doesn't shake people off their intellectual complacency to make them plunge into the abyss, but rather he 'shows' the very stoic human traits hidden deep inside human nature. As compared to commenting simply on the fact that the universe is indifferent, his work is all about that, giving the audience a quite loud and earthly hypothesis, the desperate search for grasping an ultimately avoidable universe.

Using his energy to the full extent as one of the pioneers, Prasad characteristically delivered theatre a new voice - that of the first-hand, emotionally charged communication rather than that of mere spectator. He didn't stop with the mere expansion of the borders he was already familiar with; moreover, he extremely altered the very parameters of the genre thus, by his act, the ontological perplexity is no longer being presented just as a philosophical problem but is felt in every person like a distant philosophical query adding henceforth another aspect of the theatre: the reflection of the members of the audience on their own humanity.

References

1. Heiney D, Downs LH. Continental European literature. Volume 1. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc; c1974, p. 294.
2. Ramsurat, *Theatre of the Absurd in India and Rajeshwar Prasad's Plays*, International Journal of Research in English; c2025, p.37.
3. Ibid, p.37.
4. Ramsurat, *Theatre of the Absurd: East and West*, International Journal of Applied Research; c2025, p. 141.
5. Rajeshwar Prasad, *The Travellers*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2020, p.38.
6. Ibid, p.41.
7. Ibid, p. 9.
8. Ramsurat, Theatre of the Absurd: East and West, op. cit., p. 140.
9. Rajeshwar Prasad, *The Tribute*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2022, p.33.
10. Ibid, p. 34.
11. Ibid, p. 32.
12. Ibid, p. 32.
13. Rajeshwar Prasad, *The Wife*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2021, p.40.
14. Ibid, p.38.
15. Rajeshwar Prasad, *Zero into Four*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2022, p.40.
16. Ibid, p.41.
17. Ibid, p.41.
18. Rajeshwar Prasad, *Teachers' Day*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2025, p.9.
19. Ibid, p.37.
20. Ibid, p.37.
21. Rajeshwar Prasad, *Zero into Nine*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; c2025, p.9.
22. Ibid, p.32.
23. Ibid, p.36.
24. Rajeshwar Prasad, *Zero into Plus*, (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, UK; 2025, p.39.
25. Ibid, p.36.
26. Ibid, p.42.
27. Ramsurat, Theatre of the Absurd: East and West, op.cit., p.146.