CHAPTER - VI

TECHNIQUE

Technique and Strategies:

The dictionary meaning of technique is that the manner in which a subject is treated by a writer. It is a method of artistic expression used by the writer. Pinter’s plays are governed by techniques that seek to embody both verbal and non-verbal components. This objective is achieved through the three techniques and strategies of (1) a game and role-playing, (2) imagery and symbolism, and, (3) the interplay of speech and silence. They are called strategies, because they describe how his characters are engaged in constant power struggle to make strategic use of words, modes, postures and behaviours in their interaction with one another. Pinter’s dramatic techniques also turn out to be strategies in a kind of teasing game that he plays with the readers. The operational strategies of the characters who move about in
their relatively autonomous worlds are controlled by overall dramatic strategy of Pinter. Pinter’s dramatic world is made up of a combination of actions, kinships and hostilities as well as fantasies and illusions. The overall strategy is one type of exploration; the aim is gradual self-discovery.

Pinter is concerned with selfhood, composed of instincts and impulses, dreams and perceptions. He is not quite meticulous about the outward details, like physical appearance and social identity. For him the salient points are sex and age, and they are generally the only details he offers his audience. The published list of characters for The Birthday Party for instance, is representative of Pinter’s deliberate and conscious use of minimalism:

- Petey, a man in his sixties
- Meg, a woman in her sixties
- Stanley, a man in his late thirties
- Lulu, a girl in her twenties
- Goldberg, a man in his fifties
- McCann, a man of thirty

(Plays: one, P.18)
Clothes, height and other physical descriptions are revealed through dialogues, but such information is not always consistent.

One of the essential Pinter - techniques is that of game and role playing. It refers to strategies that people evolve in order to maximize their gain and minimize their loss. Michael Kauffman suggests:

In the various forms and contexts Pinter devises, the game emerges as a subtle theatrical metaphor, a complex rite of language and action through which the characters can play out their fantasies, avoid their deepest fears, or find acceptable outlets for their hostile impulses.¹

The game becomes, in its larger sense, a metaphor for civil illusion, of rules, conventions, customs and rituals to regulate an inherently discordant reality. As it is conspicuous in The Birthday Party.

Pinter lets his characters play certain games – like "blind man's buff" in The Birthday Party. In Pinter's plays all the elements of game - playing are present such as vying and sparring of competition in a struggle for mastery, rhythms of
thrust and withdrawal, flight and pursuit, uncertainty and unpredictability. Game playing as one finds involves a simultaneous process of releasing and building up of tension.

Blindman's buff is a traditional party-game and therefore is perfectly appropriate to the play that converges on the celebration of a birthday. Stanley's birthday is literally accepted by Meg as the anniversary of his nativity. In course of the festivities, it gets associated with his metaphoric regeneration. He becomes a "new man" fit for society. This regeneration is a parody or reversal of the original regeneration myth because it does not aim at any spiritual transformation, but it results in depersonalization of Stanley. Meg plays her game to satisfy her wish to be a mother. All these games seek to conceal behind their ritualistic aspects. Conversations are carried on for the sake of conversation alone, which becomes a kind of game playing too. The games become irritating and exasperating when Stanley finds his essential identity smothered.

Rose in The Room plays the game of "everything is all-right", in ironic contrast to her tension and anxiety. Her possessing
a room, her attempt to preserve a relationship are her ritualised attitudes.

The bag snatching incident in *The Caretaker* which keeps poor Davies dangling between the two brothers Aston and Mick, is a cruel game played on him. This indicates his desperate struggle to hold on to something even while being constantly deluded.

In *The Home-coming* Ruth chooses to play the game of sex and power with utmost finesse. She can manoeuver herself into a position of authority. She plays the game of flight from her dull, domestic life as the wife of her intellectual husband and also a game of fight while confronting Max's kneeling raising his face. The way she bargains over the proposal to become a prostitute, to help the family financially, is a strategy she uses to jockey herself into a dominating position:

> I would naturally want to draw up an inventory of everything I would need, which would require your signatures in the presence of witness.

*(Plays: Three, P.93)*

Pinter's plays are full of images related to game-playing. Game offers the possibility of the release of tension and
hostility. Game becomes a social ritual, enacting social intercourse. In the plays of Pinter, this meaning is modulated into an ironic stance in which games represents a diversion from an acute sense of alienation. As Kauffman remarks:

The stage for Pinter is emblematic of essential reality, the world is a theatre where the artifice of roles and rituals and the ceremoniousness of games and playing shape men's life.²

Pinter explores the mental and psychological landscape within the formal limits of theatrical credibility. In The Room, for instance, Rose plays mother and wife to Bert; possessive and over-protective, and at the same time, homely and conventional, but withdraws from her erotic self-projections. The erotic instinct is aroused in her when Riley comes and reminds her of her past identity, perhaps hinting at her life as a whore from which she has probably escaped.

Similarly, Meg's excessive maternal and sexual interest in Stanley in The Birthday Party is a diversion from her dull domestic role of wife of Petey. Lulu, the buxom girl; stands for sheer sex. Ruth, in The Home-coming by her willingness to act as a prostitute to augment the family income, accepts a
vital erotic role and at the same time she becomes a mother to Lenny and Joey, who have lost theirs.

The blindman's buff in The Birthday Party is also a play within a play but structured in the form of a game. Unlike social realists, like Osborne, or Wesker, Pinter deals with the inscrutable mysteries of life. His characters are precariously perched on the dangerous edge of life and their feelings and responses do not easily yield to verbal articulation. In Pinter's plays there are no solutions and resolutions but motives that defy definition and feelings that elude classification. The language of symbols is the only possible alternative to the language that fails to articulate the basic paradox of human condition characterised by fears and desires, hidden and half-understood.

Pinter has commented : When a character cannot be comfortably defined or understood in terms of the familiar, the tendency is to perch him on a symbolic shelf, out of harm's way. ("Introduction", plays : one, 11) what Pinter perhaps discourages most is too literal an equation between the symbol and the reality. Certain characters, situation and objects exist both on the symbolic level and on the realistic
plane. They together symbolise the paradox of reality and illusion.

A recurrent symbol in Pinter's plays is the room. The room as a place of safety, security and retreat symbolise illusion protecting a man from a hostile world. The room is an image of stability and order in the "quicksand" of reality. (Pinter, "Introduction", Plays: One, P.12).

The reading of newspaper, a recurrent action in The Room and The Birthday Party suggests the character's attempt to hide tension and avoid communication. Pinter has indirectly warned us against too much of symbolic reading into his plays. His plays appeal to us more on social - realistic level than on symbolic level. Every object, situation or character that appears to have symbolic significance, is realistically valid and does not need any symbolic construct for the unfolding of its meaning. Since his character and situations are characterised by a sense of ambiguity, his plays cannot be pinned down to any definite symbolic construct, what we find in his plays are both the literal and symbolic. There is a smooth movement between the two, a subtle shift in aesthetic key which accounts for their sense of ambiguity.
Rose goes on speaking but Bert avoids any talk. Gus and Meg are garrulous but Ben and Petey are reticent. Conversation is a kind of escape from loneliness and a kind of illusion for lonely people like Rose & Meg etc. It is "a constant stratagem to cover nakedness" for them. (Introduction, Plays: One, P.15) As long as they keep a conversation going, they are active in a structured situation which gives them a temporary role, a confirmation of identity and an escape from the terror of unstructured isolation.

Pinter throws open a museum of dialogues reflecting the social and cultural range of identities of characters which his characters carry with them. They reveal the ownership and by implication an individual's desperate struggle for dominance and identity. The pause comes at the climax of the verbal duel and silence is the dead end of it. The pitch of the verbal duel rises slowly and gradually to the climax in the pause; then it falls to the initial point before rising up again. Such rise and fall is characteristically musical. A pause indicates the character's refusal to respond to the range of experience indicated by the other's dialogue. It also gives him time and opportunity to recuperate his strength and get
prepared for the next attack. The interplay of pause and speech is the interplay of the lurking sense of deficiency and emptiness on the one hand and strife for self importance and self-sufficiency on the other.

In his myriad roles of socio-psychological dimension, in his assigning meaning and significance to objects and actions, and in his attempts to manipulate linguistic behaviour, Pinter's characters try to comprehend the mystery and complexity of life through formal patterns and perpetual structures. The idiom of Pinter's plays is tuned to the awareness of the enigma of life and to man's efforts to express this enigma by wearing various patterns of attitudes, actions and words.

Pinter's characters try to uphold their dignity and identity against the inexorable forces of depersonalisation. The search for territory and security in Pinter's plays, which is synonymous with men's search for identity is thwarted by his ego, which is ultimately crushed by the system.
HYPOTHESIS:

Bernard Duker once commented that Pinter's plays are one of the strangest types of theatre to have emerged during the atomic age. He describes them as a product of Maxim Gorki out of Charles Adams. The plays of Pinter reflect the tension and attitudes of a present day England that is no longer a colonial power. These dramas show man reduced to a cipher, no entity and vain exercise for an identity. Unlike many other playwrights, Pinter didn't have to wait for his own technical maturity as a dramatist before he acquired the language of deceit and meretriciousness. His language is never chaste, because it is an idiom of lies and stratagems. He has only whispered dark words of warning. He has used words as incantation without letting us know to which religion his ritual belong. Language does not help hence the 'silences' and 'pauses' are used as a technique. Technique which is a discovery of themes, of predicaments and devise.
REFERENCES:
