



MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Prof. Rajani Shikhare

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Publisher	:	Anand Prakashan, Jaisingpura, Aurangabad.(M.S) Cell : 9970148704 Email: anandprakashan7@gmail.com
©	:	Author
Typeset At	:	Anand Computer Aurangabad.
Edition	:	December 2020
ISBN No	:	978-93-90004-07-2
Cover Design	:	Aura Design Mumbai.
Printed At	:	Om Offset Aurangabad.
Main Distributor	:	Anand Book Depot Jaisingpura, Aurangabad - 431004
Price	:	₹ 120 /-

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Absurd Elements In Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party, The Care Taker And The Home Coming.

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Harold Pinter has achieved the status in the contemporary theatre. His well known full-length plays, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* are the true epitomes of the theatre of the absurd.

These plays are mysterious; the construction of these plays is very complex. The beginning of these plays does not reveal the background of the characters. These plays are unable to give answer to many questions.

Pinter's method of characterization is different than that of conventional. For the conventional dramatists the past histories of the characters are of great importance for the development of plot. Past events of Characters are not important for Pinter. To him what is said and what is done on the stage is the important thing. He wants to stage facts in the light of mystery. The statements of his characters are often self contradictory and their actions are often inconsistent. Pinter hardly goes into a character's motivations. The impossibility of verifying becomes a source of suspense and the main subject of these plays.

These plays also present another element of Absurd Theatre i.e Breakdown of Communication. The characters try to communicate with one another, but the communication is inefficient and a circular effect is created as the lack of communication intensifies the menace. There is also need for verification, determining what is true and what is false, the distinction between appearance and reality. The lack of verification therefore destroys communication and the absence of communication prohibits verification of characters.

A concern of absurd dramatists is their belief that language may prevent genuine human communication. In *The Birthday Party* words are used in non-communicative ways. There are inane exchanges between Meg and Petey, when they are alone, really have nothing to say to each other. Language for other is a tool of deceit, especially for Goldberg, who uses his insincere friendliness to cheat Stanley. Mccann calmly tears a newspaper into five equal parts while Staley nervously paces. One can interpret Mccann's action as the destruction of a medium of communication. Language is treated as an unreliable tool of human expression, which is a main concern for Pinter. At the end of the play, it seems to fail altogether, at least for Stanley. About to be taken off by Mccann and Goldberg, he is incapable of uttering anything.

In *The Caretaker*, Davies does not reveal his identity to anyone. The verification of identity would be hostile. Davies, therefore, always speaks the broken sentences. Failure of communication is also found in the character of Mick. He uses a mysterious language which confuses other. Aston also suffers from the failure of communication because of his language of divine love and humanism never matches to the cruelty of modern world.

In *The Homecoming* Ruth warns the stage audience that her lips move and perhaps the fact that their movement is more significant than the words which come through them. In short, language in actual usage reveals no complete communication. In the dialogue of Harold Pinter, we can witness the desperate struggles of his characters to find the correct expression. Through these plays we came across repetition, pause and silence. These create the atmosphere of mystery and raise some questions in the mind the audience. Thus, the breakdown of communication is one of the major aspects of these plays.

Dreams and Nightmares are very effectively presented by Harold Pinter in these plays. In *The Caretaker*, every character dreams of the room i.e a place of security. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley dreams of large cities. There is a desire for eternal escape into the world of illusion, dream. Apart from these, the nightmarish past of Stanley and Aston is reflected in these plays. The Home coming represents son's dream of the sexual conquest of his mother and the discomfiture of the father. Apart from the above elements, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Home coming* deal with the menaces of life and its meaninglessness. Every

Character is haunted by sense of fear. The characters are in search of safety and security, which are probably available within the room. Here room operates as a dominant metaphor for them.

These plays deal with theme of loneliness. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley has isolated himself from the society. Meg is lonely in married life. Lulu too is alone. Likewise, in *The Caretaker*, all the characters Mick, Aston and Davies have isolated from each other. In *The Homecoming* Teddy is isolated from his family members.

In short, Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Home coming* revealed the above absurdist elements. His absurd plays compel Martin Esslin to consider him as one of the five absurd dramatists.

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