TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE PLAYS OF NISSIM EZEKIEL

ABSTRACT
OF THE
THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
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IN
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BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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Abstract

First chapter of the thesis ‘Indian English Drama: An Introduction’ offers an ample background of the history and development of Indian English drama in the light of tradition and modernity. This chapter traces the origin and the growth of the Indian theatre from Natyashastra (the oldest text of dramaturgy in India) via pre-independence era to post-independence era till the advent of Nissim Ezekiel as a playwright. This
Abstract

chapter also bears a sub-section ‘Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright’ to facilitate the readers to place Nissim Ezekiel as a modern playwright who emerges as a precursor of Indian traditional values through the treatment of various themes that fall very close to life and experience in contemporary Indian milieu. Ezekiel’s selection of theme, art of characterization, choice of western theatrical devices, deliberate expression of post-colonial diction and a blend of urban and rural Indian settings enables one to view his plays from a wider global perspective.

Second chapter ‘Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives’ attempts to explore this blend of tradition and modernity at the levels of theme, characterization, dialogue, plot, action, settings, devices and impact. The present chapter analyses the image of modern Indian women in the middle class urban Indian society. Inconsequential and unauthentic existence of the modern man finds expression through the male characters Raj and Bharat. The characters Nalini, Bharat and Raj are modern and advanced yet they experience a sense of rootlessness. Nalini, the central figure, is depicted as considerably modern and emancipated woman with her self-realization to respond to situations in her own way. By the end of the play she emerges as a strong woman by
Abstract

not fitting into the formula of male characters. Thus the play displays a fine hybridization of traditional and modern themes, characters, theatrical devices and techniques.

The themes of unhappy marriage and the contrast between native and foreign psyche have been taken up for analysis and examination in the third chapter of the thesis, ‘The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce and Marriage Poem’: A Fusion of the Eastern and Western Post-modernist Theatrical Techniques. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to observe how Ezekiel strikes a balance between the conventional and the contemporary elements. This chapter analyzes the married life of a harmonious couple, Mala and Naresh, and how extramarital affair ruins the prospects of a happy married life. Ezekiel, thus, portrays a very realistic picture of the present day society.

Similarly the other play dealt within this chapter, ‘The Sleepwalkers’ satirizes the nature of Indians who always praise and accept superiority of the Americans. The American couple is shown as guests in interaction with the Indians while, guest trying to promote their magazine. A comparative study of the Indian and American lifestyle, beliefs, diction, culture and value system is portrayed with a blend of Western theatrical
Abstract

modes of opera with an excessive use of sound, light, music and masks effect.

Chapter four of the present work entitled, ‘Song of Deprivation: Comic Morality for the Non-existing Underground Theatre in India’ attempts to picturize the modern young lovers: He and She. They are unnamed characters in the play. The entire play is in the form of telephonic conversation. This chapter throws light on the concepts of urbanization, excessive modernization and technological means and examines how these gadgets affect the quality of life of the modern man. The focus of the chapter is to project the concept of new woman through the character of She. The action lacks rapidity and pace that is why different background sound effects of transistor, teleprinter and bell are used to substitute the physical action on the stage.

The fifth chapter entitled ‘Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre’ registers an effort to showcase the tragic phenomena on the stage i.e. suicide. The play reveals the pathetic plight of the family of Mr. Nanda and deals with such themes as alienation, modernity, condition of women, human predicament,
violence, insecurity and fear. The chapter is analyzed in the light of the psychoanalytical theory and feminist perspective. At the level of characterization it examines how women suffer at the hands of a male-dominated society. They are treated like slaves. Men too fall a victim to this system that affect their lives and force them to commit suicide. This chapter also displays a blend of conventional and contemporary patterns through dialogues, language and theatrical modes.

The last chapter concludes with a humble attempt at justification of the study. There is a skillful and perfect use of ironical fantasy in almost all of his plays. Some important themes that he takes up are related to the city life, politics, loneliness, love, sexuality and similar human situation. The relevant body of this study includes ‘Indian English Drama: An Introduction’, ‘Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives’, ‘The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce and Marriage Poem: A Fusion of the Eastern and Western Post-modernist Theatrical Techniques’, ‘Song of Deprivation: Comic Morality for the Non-existing Underground Theatre in India’, ‘Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre’. The present study seeks to encompass the analyses of five major select published plays of Nissim Ezekiel in the light of the thrust area. The modern theatre substantially
Abstract

Aims to express existential hollowness through stage experiments. Indian English drama attains glory, validity and vitality through consistent attempts of playwright like Nissim Ezekiel who supplement their western insights and combine them with Indian vision to relocate the identity of Indian English theatre.

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Certified that Ms. Zoya Sheikh has completed her Ph.D. thesis, entitled “Tradition and Modernity in the Plays of Nissim Ezekiel” under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge it is her original work, and worthy of submission for the award of Ph.D. Degree.

Dr. Samina Khan
Supervisor
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface and Acknowledgements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter-I

- **Indian English Drama: An Introduction**  
  References  
  Pages 1

- **Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright**  
  References  
  Pages 28

## Chapter-II

**Nalini**: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives  
References  
Pages 46

## Chapter-III

**The Sleepwalkers**: An Indo-American Farce and **Marriage Poem**: A Fusion of the Eastern and Western Post-modernist Theatrical Techniques  
References  
Pages 104

## Chapter-IV

**Song of Deprivation**: Comic Morality for the Non-existing Underground Theatre in India  
References  
Pages 160

## Chapter-V

**Don’t Call it Suicide**: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre  
References  
Pages 190

## Chapter-VI

Conclusion  
References  
Pages 242

Select Bibliography  
Pages 250
Preface and Acknowledgements
Nissim Ezekiel (December 24, 1924-January 9, 2004) was a poet, playwright and art critic. He was considered the foremost Indian writer in English of his time. Any study pertaining to a critical assessment of his plays can be made, whether merely as a separate corpus of works, or in relation to his poetry, or in relation to other Indo-Anglian drama. This last has been briefly touched upon therefore this is an attempt to contribute to the field of Indian Drama in English. A brief but comprehensive account of the history and background of Indo-Anglian drama becomes relevant here in order to place Nissim Ezekiel as a playwright.

When we deliberate on the present scene of Indian writing in English in general and of Indian Drama in English in particular, we may not get great playwrighting comparable to the world’s greatest, but we are likely to get serious and interesting work. Indian English Drama dates from 1831, when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes* illustrative of the present state of Hindoo society in Calcutta. Owing to a lack of a firm dramatic tradition and local theatrical habitations early Indian English Drama failed to secure success and dramatic acknowledgement in comparison to foreign authors performances in English. In consequence to this, early Indian drama grew in Bengal and other parts of India as mostly in the form of closet drama. Only Sri
Aurobindo Rabindranath Tagore and Harindranath Chattopadhyay produced a substantial corpus of dramatic writings.

As in the earlier period, there are a handful of playwrights who engaged themselves in sustained activity in the middle period (pre-independence) hence the contribution towards playwrighting was rather small. A.S. Panchapakesa Ayyar (1899-63), Thyagaraya Paramasive Kailasam (1885-1946) and Bharti Sarabhai (1912) made a few noteworthy attempts to nourish Indian Drama in English.

Unlike poetry and fiction, drama has not registered very notable gains during the post-independence period. An important reason for this might be that drama, being essentially a composite art, involving the playwright, the actors and the audience in a shared experience on the stage, has its own limitations of which the other literary forms are free. Post-independence drama, to an extent did benefit largely by the growing interest abroad in Indian English literature, and a number of plays by playwrights like Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Girish Karnad, and Gurucharan Das were successfully staged in Europe and the United States of America. As a result of sensitive and serious efforts for promoting the performing arts institutes for the promotion of dramatics appeared in big cities. Drama departments were established in some Universities, national drama festival was started in Delhi by Sangeet Natak Akademi. But all these development supported regional language theatre, while most of Indian English plays suffered lack of opportunities to seek living theatres for staging plays.

It was in this phase of transition that Nissim Ezekiel started writing in English. Ezekiel established himself as a sensitive poet, a promising
playwright, academic critic, prose writer, editor of literary magazine and a devoted teacher. Ezekiel’s writing is an embodiment of the best of Indian civilization and tradition. An Indian Jew by birth, Nissim Ezekiel transcended all borders and spoke in the voice of love and sanity. He presented an insightful picture of life in his writing.

The present study proposes to analyze the plays of Nissim Ezekiel as an extension to his creative spirit that was expressed in his poetry and other works. Present research work entitled ‘Tradition and Modernity in the Plays of Nissim Ezekiel’ is an attempt to explore the aspects of tradition and modernity in Ezekiel’s plays through plots, settings, thematic concerns, characterization, language, devices, theatrical techniques and theories etc.

Keeping in views the limitations of critical material available on the plays, the present study tried to trace all the associated concerns and ideas. However, whatever existing materials the scholar could lay hands on, a thorough examination of the same has been conducted to make this study convincing.

This research work is an attempt to present an analysis of the plays of Ezekiel which had been an unexplored area so far. The present research project aims at analyzing the fusion of tradition and modernity in the plays of Nissim Ezekiel.

This project is an effort to highlight the different aspects of Ezekiel’s published plays. The present thesis, nevertheless, is a statement on the growth and evolution of Indian English drama. It traces the history of Indian English drama through theory of Natyashastra and gives a brief account of the various dramatists and shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a
modern playwright. It has chapters which focused on the traditional and modern elements in the plays of Nissim Ezekiel. The present work has based itself on theoretical ground where his aims and objectives get actually well served and justified in the forthcoming chapters. Beside, as it is apparent from the present study that it opens fresh evenness for contributing more in the field of drama.

It would be better if this research project be comprehended as an attempt of comparison between conventional and modern aspects in Indian English drama. Thus, the present thesis hopes to demonstrate the present context of human existence and modern theatrical techniques in the specific Indian references.

The trend of modernity and tradition has been explored in the five select major plays of Nissim Ezekiel i.e. *Nalini- A Comedy* (1969), *Marriage Poem-A Tragi-comedy* (1969), *The Sleepwalkers- An Indo-American farce* (1969), *Song of Deprivation-A Comic Morality in One Act for the Non-existent Underground Theatre in India* (1963), *Don’t Call it Suicide-A Tragedy* (1993). The lesser known plays; *Who Needs no Introduction* (1969), *The Wonders of Vivek* (1986), *A Family Failure* (1986) have been staged but do not fall under the purview of this study. There is a skilful use of ironical fantasy in these plays. Some important themes that he takes up are related to the city life, politics, loneliness, love, sexuality and similar human situations. As Moraes puts it, “Ezekiel displayed a wry drily mischievous sense of humour and an eye that was observant and sympathetic at once.” In comparison to his poetry, unfortunately enough critical and academic attention has not been paid to his plays so far. Present thesis is an attempt to study his plays at the level of both theme
and technique. This study may benefit from what Ezekiel himself said in an interview on research prospects in the area of Indian Drama in English.

“Research Workers in this area should know the odds. They should study the social and cultural context of the subject in addition to the texts. Once they begin doing that, they will come up with plenty of data and ideas, even if the actual body of relevant drama is small. They need, of course, a strong feeling for drama as theatre, the art of acting, stage-designing and so on. I can only advise them not to lose interest because of real or alleged paucity of plays.”

It gives me immense pleasure to place on records my sincere gratitude for my supervisor Dr. Samina Khan whose advice, support and encouragement has made the present work possible. Her dedication as a teacher and a supervisor remained a source of inspiration for me to complete this project. I am extremely thankful to all the teachers of the department and other staff of the Department of English for their encouragement from time to time.

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[ZOYA SHEIKH]
CHAPTER 1

Indian English Drama: An Introduction
Indian English Drama: An Introduction

Drama, being close to life and experience holds philosophy and instructive value in perfect synthesis of modernity in technical performatory aspects and traditional sanctity in the expression of variety of contents and themes. India has had a long tradition of myths, dances, music, folklores and other art forms; this is now beginning to receive devotional and sensitive acceptance from mass media and public. It would be noteworthy to present here, a background of Indian drama as a relative feature to express traditionally oriented modern worldview.

Indian Drama or Indian theater includes within itself many characteristics. When one talks of ‘Indian theatre’ one enters a vast and intricate arena, both idiomatically heterogeneous and polyglot in character. Although numerous strands show us links, it is after all, an arbitrary term, randomly used to designate one or the other of the diverse performance arts practised in the country, belonging to diverse traditions. It is extraordinarily inclusive-encompassing the classical (like the kathakali, or some Bharatanatyam pieces), ritual (such as the Raas, the Ramlila or the Theyyam), devotional (many of the musically-dominant performances), folk (like the Chhau or the Therukuttu) and modern, partaking of sundry traditions, forms and lore, sometimes unique and sometimes bewilderingly intermingling with each other. Dance, drama, mime, song,
instrumentation, puppetry and the orally delivered narrative, all combine happily and almost seamlessly in a performance by an ensemble of artistes working simultaneously.

The origin of drama dates back to the Christian era. It originated in India, as Bharat says, when once all the gods prayed to Brahma to make a source of entertainment for them which could entertain them. They prayed to Brahma to create something which would suit all sections of society Brahma created for them something that would have visual and auditory appeal, and then he created the drama out of the four Vedas: plot from Rigveda, music from Samveda, acting from the Yajurveda and rasas, or human emotions from Atharvaveda. After combining all these he created a fifth Veda called Drama.

Hence in India drama was brought in to existence by Lord Brahma. It thus has a divine origin. Drama is mentioned in great epics like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. The Epics present a description about drama and dramatic art. In The Ramayana, Valmiki, the first poet, discusses the word ‘Nat’ or ‘Narataka’. The meaning of this word is actor or player. Likewise, The Mahabharata also defines drama which involves in itself many things; it is a blend of story poetry and action.

About the origin of Indian drama, A.L.Basham, a prominent historian, observes:

The origin of the Indian theatre is still obscure, it is certain, however that even in the vedic period, dramatic performances of some kind were given, and passing references in early sources point to the inaction at festivals of religious legends, perhaps only in dance and mime (Basham, 1987,434).
The tradition of drama in India can be identified by various forms, because it has a splendid past that can be traced back to Sanskrit drama. The tradition of India drama is preserved in the “Natyashastra” which is said to be the oldest text on the theory of drama.

In the Vedic age drama was performed in a different but simple way. The dramatic performances of those times include depictions of everyday life. Some members of the tribe acted like animals and others like hunters and in this way a mock hunt was presented. The person who acted as hunter followed the one who behaved or acted like goats, buffaloes, reindeers, monkeys etc. This was one of the way in which drama was performed during the age of Vedic Aryans. Initially drama was concerned with this type of performance; later the themes of plays were taken from *The Ramayana, Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad-Gita*.

These types of performances which were earlier popular are still in practice during Dussehra, etc. The episode of killing of Ravana is enacted in different parts of India. There are references to drama in Patanjali’s *Vyakarna Mahabhashya*, Jame’s *Aagam of Rajpasini Sultan* as well as Vatsyayam’s *Kamasutra*, Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* and Panini’s *Ashtabhyam*.

Thus, the origin of Sanskrit drama dates back to 1000 B.C. In Sanskrit all literature is classified into two- Drishya and Sravya. Drishya means that it can be seen or exhibited and sravya means that it can be heard or recited. Drama is said to be Drishya, while poetry comes within sravya. Drama can be seen or exhibited while poetry is meant to be heard or recited. In Sanskrit literature, drama falls under ‘Rupaka’ which means depiction of life in its various aspects represented in forms by actors who assume
various roles. ‘Rupaka’ can be divided into ten, in which Nataka (Drama) is the most important one, which means all dramatic presentations.

The Sanskrit drama was based on three primary constituents: Vastu (plot), Neta (hero) and Rasa (sentiments). The plot can be divided into two principal (adhikarika) or accessory (Prasangika). Principal concerns the primary characters of the theme and diffuses the entire play, and Accessory supplements the main topic. It also relates to subordinate characters. It can be further divided into two: banner (pataka) and incident (parkari). The banner is a small episode that presents, describes, improves and then hinders the primary plot to create added excitement. The incident involves minor characters.

The hero or Neta which is prescribed by Natyashastra has several characteristics. The hero is always depicted as modest (vineeta), sweet tempered (madhura), sacrificing (tyagi), capable (daksha), civil in talks (priyamvada), belonging to a noble family (taptaloka), pure (sachi), articulate (vagini), consistent (sthera), young (yuva); endowed with intellect (buddhi), enthusiasm (utsaha), good memory (smrthi), aesthetics (kala), pride (manna) brave (shura), strong (dridha), energetic (tejaswi), learned (pandita) and pious (dharmika). These are characteristic in which hero is always depicted, but the main category in which a hero of Sanskrit drama comes is ‘Dheerodatta’, which means one who is brave and sublime at the same time.

Indian English drama gained certain validity through translations and adaptation in other languages. It was Sir William Jones who translated Shankuntala in 1789 and made Hindi plays first known to the European world. It was thought that in India, Greek literature penetrated or and had its influence on the playwrights. This thinking however changed with
time. According to many critics, the Hindu drama originated by itself and is neither borrowed nor an imitation.

In earlier times, Bhasa or Bharata is traditionally known to be the founder and “father” of Indian Drama; thirteen of his works have been discovered and published. There is always confusion about the authorship of many plays because earlier there was this custom of attributing a literary work to the ruler at whose court or under whose favour the actual author lived. The earliest extant stage piece is ascribed to a Sudraka. It is one of the oldest play which dates back to 400 A.D. It is among one of the oriental dramas which deals with the life of the middle class.

The works of traditional playwrights Bhasa or Bharata, and Sudraka is said to be the earlier works in the field of drama. Hence drama has a glorious past. The Sanskrit dramatic works depict different mental states, emotions and ideas, desires and aspirations, strengths and weakness, basic moral and social questions as well as individual predicaments they also present a many layered, fascinating picture of the social, political, economic and cultural life of those times. Plays like *Madhyama Vyayoga, Urubhanga, Swapnavadatta, Pratima, Abhijnan Shakunthala, Vikramorvarshiya, Mrichachhatika, Mudrarakshasa, Uttaramacharita, Ratnavali, Kundamala, Bhagawadejjukiya* are significant works that would bring credit to any literature, for their delicate aesthetic sense, structural spill, variety dramatic and theatrical quality of the language, and excellence of their poetry. These plays earned a distinct place in the dramatic literature worldwide.

The classical period of Indian drama lasted until the 8th century A.D. According to some authorities this period extended to the 11th century, and the period after it which is post classical is divided into period of
decline, which lasted till 14th century, and the period of decadence, that is, 14th century and after.

The dramatist of the classical period wrote romantic and dramatic idylls rather than tragedies. In their plays women’s role were performed by the women not by men or boys, as in Greek theatre. Indian drama was written in Sanskrit on special occasions for an upper class audience and it accordingly never attained the vigor, significance and humanity of a social or national art.

It is due to an elaboration of liturgical practices by which drama originated in Asia. India is said to be the source of Asian theatre. There are several causes which helped in the development of Indian drama and one of them is the Buddhist pilgrims who, after their gradual expulsion from India wandered to different places and helped art and literature to flourish. Therefore, the influence of dance and drama is found everywhere in the east.

There are also several factors which created the hindrance in the path of the development of drama. In India, Muslim invasions from 12th to 15th century adversely affected development of the drama, and British rule in the 18th and 19th century almost put an end to the native art of India. These factors influenced the indigenous art in India and in a way restricted the drama. But later this form of art was encouraged and prospered.

One of the earliest known Sanskrit grammarian and scholar Panini wrote in his *Ashtadhyayi*, approximately around the 6th century B.C. about the *Natyashastra*, which is a text book for Nata (Sanskrit word with different meanings actor, dancer, acrobat), attributing it to Silalini (thought to be an actor community) and Krisasava. Bharata’s *Natyashastra* is a treatise
on dramaturgy. It involves, in itself, description about the drama. *Natyashastra* (2000 B.C. to 4th century AD) was the most elaborate treatise on dramaturgy.

The traditional account in Bharat’s *Natyashastra* gives a divine origin to Indian theatre, attributing it to the *Natyaveda*, the holy book of dramaturgy created by Lord Brahma. Various traditions in dance, mime and drama were consolidated and codified by Bharata Muni. *Natyashastra* also describes the ten classifications of dramas which vary from one to ten acts. *Natyashastra* is the only book of ancient time which contains in it such a vast or thorough study on dramaturgy.

*Natyashastra* contains in detail, a description about the composition, production and enjoyment of ancient drama, also a wealth of information of types of drama, dance, stage, equipment, production and music.

Bharata believes drama to have divine origin, especially from devotional dance drama forms. According to him poetry (Kavya), dance and mime (nritya) are life as play (lila) that produce emotion (bhava), but only drama (natya) produces flavour (rasa). The eight basic emotions depicted in drama are joy, humour, anger, sadness, pride, fear, aversion and wonder.

Thus, when the dramatic art was well comprehended then, on the occasion of Lord Indra’s victory over the asuras and danavas, Natyaveda was performed. In the sixth chapter of *Natyashastra* there is a verse which can be quoted as Bharatmuni’s own summary of his dramatic theory.

*The combination called natya is a mixture of rasa, bhavas, vrittis, pravrittis, siddhi, svaros, abhinayas, dharmis, instruments, song and theater house* (Sharma, 2009, www.literacyindia.com).
Indian English Drama: An Introduction

*Ramayana, Mahabharata* and later legends of Krishna are the sources which provide plenty of thematic material by which the Indian drama developed from the Northern Ramlila which is performed yearly in Delhi to the Kathakali dances of South India and the dance dramas of related countries.

In its first chapter, the *Natyashastra* records the legend of the origin of drama. The legend is important to an understanding of Indian drama interpreted variously; the legend is significant in defining the Indian concept of theater. (Rubin, 1998, 127).

Traditional Indian drama seems to be connected with religion from the time of its origin. It is associated with the gods. It was performed by them as an act of worship and watched by the people as an act of devotion.

In the Indian aesthetics tradition, drama is known as Drishya Kavya (visual poetry), in performance it is Preksha (Spectacle) Drama and dance are so inseparable in Indian aesthetics that, it is at times, impossible to distinguish them as two separate art forms. *The Natyashastra* gives a detailed description of all aspect of the art of acting, especially hand gestures and bodily movements.

The *Natyashastra* is incredibly wide in its scope. *Natyashastra* influences English drama too in India. It describes about the manner in which portrayal is to be done and also what is to be portrayed in drama. It contains, within itself, the minutely detailed precept for both playwright and actors. It gives knowledge to both playwright and actor. It also lays down principles in each individual chapter for stage design, makeup costume, dance, a theory of rasas and bhavas, acting, directing and music.

Indian English drama develops as a blend of classical spirit and western theatrical models.
Some of the well known Sanskrit play such as *Shakuntala* and *The Little Clay Cart* (also called the Toy Cart) have been translated and widely performed in Europe and America. The larger part of this literature is hardly accessible outside of India. The scope of Sanskrit drama is very vast as far as the range is concerned. On these great works, Keats’s famous line is very apt “nor hungry generation treads thee down.”

Sanskrit plays which can claim to influence the works of European dramatists particularly, of Shakespeare. This influence can be seen in the work of Sri Aurobindo, *Vasavadutta*, which is very close to *Swapan vasavadattam*, (by the great poet Bhasa).

Like their Greek and Elizabethan counterpart’s, Indian playwrights writing Sanskrit literature borrow extravagantly from history and legends for their plot construction. Most writers whether old or new, find in Indian culture ample matter for their work. Writers find this rich tradition an inexhaustible source of story, plot and music. Works of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Gopal Gandhi, Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sircar are highly influenced by the rich tradition of Sanskrit plays and western insights derived from Greek and Roman models of dramaturgy.

14th century periodic Muslim invasions in India are thought to bring an end to the writing and production of classical Indian drama. After this, Sanskrit plays in India were written at great intervals and seldom performed. The plays of Sri Rabindranath Tagore then gained popularity.

None of these later isolated dramas, moreover, attained the poetic level of the dramas of the Indian classical period, at least until the advent of Sri Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) whose poetic and symbolic dramas, including *The King of the Dark Chamber* and *The cycle of Spring* stirred interest
Indian English Drama: An Introduction

throughout India and abroad. (Encyclopedia Americana, 1829, 307).

The sad Cinderella of Indian English literature from the beginning, drama remains its Cinderella still, waiting for her prince. (Mee, 2001, 201).

There were many restrictions in the growth of Indian English drama. Certain factors are there, which became a hindrance in the way of development of Indian drama in English. English fails to recreate that impact on the minds of the Indian recipients, readers, audience. This is the reason why a framework is provided to make the Indian drama grow vigorously in regional languages. There are many writers who enriched Indian drama in English; in the past, writers like Shri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, T.P. Kailasam, Bharati Sarabhai and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and at present Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad, Badal Sarkar, Lakhan Deb, Gurcharan Das and Vijay Tendulkar.

There is one more reason for the failure of Indian English drama to plant itself in the Indian ethos. In India, dramatists use many things to enrich their writings because India has been a rich store house of myths and legends of folk tales and customs, of historical events and cultural heritage, but all the writers are not able to do so. Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore tried also to make use of this but they could not decide firmly about the conflict and ambivalence between the inner and outer worlds. The reason for their failure was that the classical Sanskrit tradition has to be tailored to modern needs, but they ignored this aspect, but some contemporary playwrights who benefited from it are Girish Karnad and Asif Currimbhoy. They incorporated ancient tales and myths,
folk tales and conventions in their plays. Some of their works are conspicuous example of this experiment, like Karnad’s *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana* and Currimbhoy’s *Goa, Inquilab* and the *Hungry Ones*. These all are plays which focus unexplored themes. All these plays are of cultural, social and political relevance and point towards the direction which is not so thoroughly explored.

Indian English drama is rich storehouses of a variety of concepts. The third cause behind the lesser popularity of India English drama is its lack of suitability to the Indian stage. Due to this inadequacy it has suffered greatly in theatrical effects.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks,

Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole, of high quality. Enterprising Indians have, for nearly a century, occasionally attempted drama in English but seldom for the actual stage production. (Iyengar, 1985, 226).

In the Elizabethan age English drama flourished rapidly all over because many talented writers produced plays which contained within them an element of wit, humour, song and dance. They made use of these elements in their plays according to the public taste Indian English drama could not serve as an effective medium to express Indianness through content and technique.

Post-colonial Indian drama was source of protest against the British Raj. The first phase (fifty years after the independence) of Indian post-colonial theatre reflected and executed protest through anti-British sentiments, partition, assassination of Gandhi and themes associated with nationalism. Later phase reflected the different aspects of Indian life and
displayed various issues connected with social life like poverty, suffering and agony of the common people. Hence it can be said that British colonialism in India changed the face of drama in India. From a source of entertainment and delight it became a weapon to showcase social changes in India. English theatre originated in European countries and evolved in diverse stages. But Indian English drama came to India in the later part of the 17th century with the coming of the East India company. British colonialism is said to be one of the major causes in changing the face of Indian dramaturgy. According to Rabindranath Tagore, a nation’s culture is judged by the standards of its theatre. In India there is a cultural revival in the recent years and the effect of this cultural revival can be seen through literature of several Indian languages. It is drama which is thought to be the embodiment of contemporary life of a nation. Though drama is obviously intended to be enacted, it is a Drishya Kavya; it co-existed with poetry and novel and other literary forms. The theatre is said to be worthy even when it is able to show the contemporary life of the nation.

If the theatre is to be really potent and great it must be an embodiment of contemporary life of the nation. Otherwise the theatre would cease to be a living force. It might probably provide for a certain amount of entertainment, but otherwise it would be worthless and ephemeral. (Gokak,1957,297).

P.V.Rajmmannar remarks,

I, however, use the expression “contemporary life” in a very wide and comprehensive manner since I do not mean to say that a play should be a chronicle of contemporary events. It will not then be a creative work of art, the life of a nation does not consist only in the material events, which happen in the political and other spheres of its activity, it comprises its
beliefs and ideals, its traditions and achievements, its aims and aspirations. (Gokak, 1957, 297).

There are many subjects that supply themes and perspective for a living theatre like history, biography, myths and folklore contemporary events and thoughts, etc.

P.V. Rajamanhar remarks,

I have recently come across several plays which appear to be popular and deal with certain problems of contemporary life, but are definitely propagandistic. I do not deny that the drama can be used as a means of propaganda. But such plays, in my opinion, can never be really great art. (Gokak, 1957, 298).

The playwright should have, within him this urge to educate the public through his dramas which should not merely be a source of entertainment to all, but it should provide a better outlook and be able to educate the public.

The public is like a flock that needs good shepherding, and a good shepherd can always drive his flock wherever he desires them to go. (Gokak, 1957, 298).

In comparison to poetry, prose, novel the outcome of drama is meager. It can be said that during the time of Indo-Anglian writing good plays could not be written as theatre were suppressed and under strict government control. Plays were written on derived themes from great Epics like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. Vasudeva Rao’s Nala and Damayanti (1928) is one such example T.P. Kailasam’s the Burden (1933), Fulfillment (1933), The Purpose (1944), Karna, the Brahmins Curse (1946) and Keechaka (1949) interpret mythological and historical themes.

There are other plays which are based on historical legends. For example, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya wrote Siddhartha, Man of Peace (1956)

Similarly, some plays focus on the theme of contemporary social life Harindranath Chattopadhyaya’s *The Widow* and *The Patriot* focus on the miserable life of the poor. His three plays, *Sentrey’s Lantern, The Coffin, The Evening Lamp* deals with social revolution. Asif Currimbhoy has been hailed as a versatile playwright. He wrote *The Clock, The Dumb Dancer, Om, The Captives, Hungry Ones, and Thorns on a Canvas, Goa and Doldrummers*. He has been praised for his choice of unusual themes and picturesque setting.

One of the most distinguished women dramatists was Bharati Sarabhai (1912), a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. She has written two plays, *The Well of The People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952) which shows an impact of Gandhian thought. Among her plays are *The Well of the People*. It is a play which is based on the real story found in Gandhi’s Harijan. It is a story about an old widow in verse. In this play she shows how in the Gandhian age, new social awareness fused itself with the age old religious consciousness, thereby leading to a resurgence of the spirit.

In this play she uses symbolic characters. Her verse is unaffected and energetic, eschews poeticism and makes frequent use of speech rhythms. Colourful Indian imagery is used, but without a trace of self consciousness. This play deals with the supreme moment in the life of an old widow in a pilgrimage to Haridwar. She uses symbolic and mystic expression to evoke India’s national aspiration. She dramatised the most significant religious moment –Kumbha Mela at Haridwar in the spring of
1938. Hence, *The Well of the People* is a pageant and a poetic expression of Sarabhai’s feeling.

Another play is *Two Women*; it is a prose play and it has a sad anti-climax. It is story of two women—Anuradha, a typical Hindu wife having unhappy married life with a westernized husband; and the other is Urvashi, an unattached singer and dancer and both of these women are essentially one—an artist and the other a saint. Both the women in the end accept the message from the Gita that the only way to moksha (salvation) is doing one’s duty.

Throughout the play, there is a conflict between tradition and modernity, between the material and the spiritual.

As Iyengar remarks,

> The great merit of the drama is that, although it reaches some sort of conclusion, we are left with the impression that the real conclusion is yet to come not in the lives of Anuradha and Urvashi alone, but in our own lives. (Iyengar, 1985, 240).


As Iyengar comments on the Lobo Prabhu,

> .............Lobo Prabhu’s energy is obvious, he can write dialogues with facility, he can devise situations; but his characters are rarely live, and his denouements are seldom wholly convincing. (Iyengar, 1985, 242).
He has written many plays on different themes like *Mother of New India* based on the theme of social reformation. It is a story about Narsa who is mentally disturbed by the death of her fiancé Indra. Thus is helped by his uncle’s suggestion to devote her in village construction. And she is respected as the Mother. Another play, *Apes in the Parlour* is based on the theft of a precious stone from a temple by a cinema actress. In *The Family Cage*, the theme of leprosy is shown. *Flags of The Heart*, shows love thwarted by caste, *Winding Ways* presents the ‘Christian ethic of love’ and the ‘Hindu ethic of detachment’. *Dogs Ghost* is a play for non-vegetarians. We can say that his characters are paste board. And his dialogue is full of poeticism.

Other playwrights are A.K.Krishnaswami who has written plays like *The Two Twice Born* (1914) and S.M.Michael’s with Nation’s Builders. This play focuses on widow remarriage and intercaste marriages. Dramatists of this period mostly focus on social ills and other such problems.

V.V.Srinivasa Iyengar (1871-1954) was a master of social comedy. He had a real talent for farce and comedies. He mostly deals with the lives of the sophisticated middle class people, frequently encountered in metropolitan cities. In which one can find out interesting situations with entertaining and witty dialogues.

Sudhindra Nath Ghose (*Colours of The Great City*), R.K.Narayana (*The Watchman of The Lake*), K.R.S.Iyengar (*The Storm In The Tea Cup and The Battle of The Optionals*) Balwant Gargi (*The Vultures And Other Plays*) and Mrinalini Sarabhai (*The Captive Soil*) and some other playwrights, through one play or the other, have enriched the Indian drama with variety of classical and modern themes and values.
In post-Independence period Indian English drama has had less advancement due to the fact that there was no regular theatre. But after independence, when The Five Year plans got implemented they became a medium for encouraging performing arts. Many institutions were established such as the National School of Drama in Delhi. Institutions for training in dramatic art were founded in many cities and in many Universities, departments of drama were introduced. The National Drama Festival was started by The Sangeet Natak Akademi in Delhi, through it could only benefit regional theatres in India. The Agencies and Theatre Group of Bombay presented many plays and staged them. Pratap Sharma’s *A Touch of Brightness*, Asif Currimbhoy’s *The Doldrummers*, Gurcharan Das’s *Larins Sahib*, Gieve Patel’s *Princess*, Shiv Kumar’s *Last Wedding Anniversary*. But these plays failed to contribute much in the field of Indian English drama.

Modern theatre in India focused on the middle class and upper middle class. It became an urban phenomenon and it developed in urban cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai). Earlier drama was performed in English, but in the last century drama started developing in Indian languages too. And it became one of the weapons used against the social and political reform. Many playwrights started focusing on social problems.

Most of the major theatre of India is Amateur theatre, in which one has least scope of earning. It is basically for those who are really interested in theatre and drama. Many cities have a high quantity of Amateur theatre. In Kolkata there are three thousand registered theatre groups that involved themselves in serious plays, having social, satirical and political ideas. In Mumbai there are over five hundred theatre groups. Here plays
are written in many languages—Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, English and South Indian. After the establishment of The Indian National Theatre (INT) in 1944 all plays came under (INT). Delhi also has a hundred theatre groups. Many personalities nurture the theatre and give it a new direction, like the late Prithviraj Kapoor who founded the Prithvi theatre and did remarkable work for the progress of Hindi theatre. Another one is Ebrahim Alkazi who started the theatre group in 1953. Alyque Padamsee is a personality of the theatre movement in Mumbai and is known to lead directors of English theatre. But drama got a specific direction with the establishment of the National School of Drama in the 1960s.

A branch of Amateur theatre is the Experimental theatre. But this group is different from Amateur theatre in its objective and approach. In Kolkata, Badal Sircar is a leader of the experimental Theatre (Third Theatre). In Delhi Safdar Hashmi is street formnthetre focused on the working class. In Mumbai, Mohan Rakesh ran experimental workshop which developed a new area in the production of non-realistic plays in Hindi till his death in 1972. In his plays the main focus was on the physical movement, gesture and sounds, rather than on text.

In post-Independence phase many plays were staged abroad which increased the interest of the audience outside India, like the plays of Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Gurcharan Das whose plays were staged in Europe and America. Even after all these interests drama was not benefited and it could not lead to the establishment of a regular school of drama. Due to the Indian regional language theatre drama lacked to show its worth on a living theatre. But it is this period in which many talented playwrights made drama a stronger and more expressive medium. Playwrights like G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb, Pratap Sharma, Gurcharan Das,
Asif Crirmbhoy and Girish Karnad with their new methods, techniques enriched the Indian drama in English.  
G.V.Desani one of the modern playwrights, has written ‘poem play’ Hali which is of about 300 pages. It was planned as an epic but later changed into drama. It is Desani’s solitary experiment with drama, it is a complex work. In Hali Desani shows everyman’s quest for fulfilment. The protagonist of the play is Hali who stands for humanity in both its male and female aspect. This play received a high praise from British critics for its thematic richness and style.  
Iyengar comment on the play Hali:

........it was published in 1950, and received due praise for its originality, its symbolism, the richness of its imagery, its sheer apocalyptic quality. A short poetic play, Hali is an attempt to project the story of a ‘passion’. In another words Hali’s confrontation of the powers of creation and destruction, his grapple with life and death, his surrender to the play of this phenomenal world, his communion with love, and his transcendence of the dualities of time and place...........
(Iyengar, 1985,243).

Lakhan Deb is one of the playwrights who has specialized in historical themes. He has composed two plays-Tiger Claw (1967) and Murder at the Prayer Meeting (1976). His three act play, The Tiger Claw shows Shivaji’s killing of Afzal Khan. In this play Shivaji is shown to be a wise warrior and a generous man.  
As Iyengar remarks,  
The Shivaji Afzal Khan theme has elements of pure drama, and Lakhan Deb has presented a credible enough Shivaji...
(Iyengar,1985,241).

Iyengar talks about the Tiger Claw and writes;
In his candid preface, Lakhan Deb says that, even when “the death warrant of English is signed by the political executioners” English will continue to be loved in many Indian homes for her wealth of active verbs and subtle charms of expression, her flexible syntax and semantic power...... (Iyengar,1985,246).

His other play *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* shows the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathu Ram Godse. The theme and technique of this play is based on Greek Model and employs the unities of time, place and action, as weas a prologue and chorus too.

The most prolific Indian English playwright of this period is Asif Currimbhoy (1928). He has written almost thirty plays within eighteen years starting from 1959. He is a playwright who covers a wide range of themes from history, politics, society, religion, art and metaphysics. As far as his subject matter is concerned it is based on amazing history and current politics, social and economic problems, the east-west encounter psychological conflicts, the religion, philosophy and art. He has many plays which are based on different themes. It can be divided into groups according to their themes or subject matters. There are many plays which deal with recent political events, like the partition and its aftermath (*The Restaurant*, 1960), the Sino Indian conflict (*The Captives*, 1963), The liberation of Portuguese Goa (*Goa* 1964); the coming of freedom to a typical island in the Malaysean archipelago (*Monsoon*, 1965); the India freedom struggle and the assassination of Gandhi (*An Experiment with Truth* 1969); The Naxalite movement (*Inquilab*. 1970), The Bangladesh war (*The Refugee*, 1971) and *Sonar Bangla* 1972; The Chinese invasion of Tibet (*om mane padme hum*; 1972), the vicissitudes in the history of Indo-
China (Angkor 1973) and the recent agitation in Gujarat (The Dissident M.L.A.), a play which deals with the social issues. The Doldrummers (1960) and The Miracle Seed (1973) it shows famine situation in Maharashtra. The East-West encounter is shown in the Tourist Mecca (1959), The Hungry ones (1965, 77) and Darjeeling Tea (1971), In the Clock (1959) psychological portrayal is shown and in Om (1961), the evolution of Hindu religion is shown.

He has a variety within him, as is written in Perspective and Challenges.

He has the unique ability to create visual and auditory images on the stage with the help of various theatrical techniques he wants to shock the audience and make them feel for human suffering. He has been constantly experimenting with new forms, new subject matters, new structures and new modes of presentation. (Tandon, 2006, 18).

But sometimes he uses superficial themes and pasteboard characters which make his play appear artificial. Dialogues are lacking in invention, symbols are crude but instead of all these features, he is capable of creating proper atmosphere, interesting situations and powerful characters. Pratap Sharma, another dramatist of post-Independence period had his play A Touch of Brightness (1968) banned for the reason that in this play a red light district of Bombay is shown. The story revolves around the young street urchin Pidku and his attachment with the beggar girl; Prema, and due to this attachment, a man Banarsi Babu, a pavement dweller, passionate about chess, develops a feeling of jealousy for them. Banarsi Babu, sells the girl but his adopted son Pidku, wants to buy freedom for that girl. When he is able to afford money she dies of a venereal disease. This play is one of the flawed works. It shows the language which is seen to be influenced by Hindustani words and
expression; the characters are not believable. The plot of the drama moves jerkily and it shows sentimentality and melodrama.

As Shanta Gokhale remarks in *An illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*,

----------It is the first attempt at showing the seamy side of a country, which in the 1960s, had became the west’s spiritual Mecca. The play raised the hackles of India’s image makers, who banned it from going to the first commonwealth Arts Festivals. (Mehrotra, 2003, 342).

Gurcharan Das was born into a middle class family in pre-Independence India. He is the author of three plays, which he composed in his twenties. He has written many novels. In the Introduction of his book Three English plays 2001. Gurcharan Das writes:

Writing a play takes a certain amount of audacity, which I seem to lack today. I wrote all my plays in my twenties. I had more courage then and I would be very scared of writing a play now. (Chandra, www.museindia.com).

He is one of the writers who took up themes from history. He takes characters and stories from history and puts them in to a new frame to make it a romantic tale. Gurcharan Das’s *Larins Sahib* (1970) shows the crisis of Punjab which occurs after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When East-India Company routed the Sikhs, one of the friends of Indians, the legendary Henry Lawrence appointed the company agent. Some sort of intimacy developed between him and Ravi Jindan Kaur, widow of Ranjit Singh. She presented a ring of her husband to him and it developed in him, a feeling to become the second king and he started calling himself Angrez Maharaja. The language used by Das is very apt according to the class and race representative characters in the play.
As written by Santa Gokhle,

"He did not wish to be seen as interpreting history, but as breathing life into facts. Larins Sahib, is as a consequence, a well crafted piece of colourful dramatic entertainment rather than an attempt to relate the past to the present. (Mehrotra, 2003, 343).

Another important dramatist of this period is Girish Karnad who is the living legend of contemporary Indian English Drama. He is a leading playwright and outstanding practitioner of performing arts. He is a playwright, actor, critic and emissary of Indian art and culture. He has received recognition both nationally and internationally. He has played many roles together; as an actor, director, art critic, film star, but best in playwrighting, as he has himself admitted. His contribution to Indian English Drama is Immense. He has written five plays: Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Tale Danda and the Fire and the Rain, and translated them into English.

Karnad is influenced most by Irish playwright Henrik Ibsen; an outstanding figure of his age in dramatic art and whose works became model for many dramatists since the late nineteenth century. Karnad has acquired much of the style and technique of Henrik Ibsen; hence he allows symbolism to permeate his plays with a blend of classic Indian myths.

His play Tughlaq (1972) is a historical play, which is based on the life of sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq of fourteenth century India. Another play is Hayavadana (1975) in which he has used folk motifs, like the Bhagavata narrator, masks, miming, the chorus etc. It is taken from the ancient Kathasaritsagar.
Karnad has given the Indian theatre a richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor-director. His contribution goes beyond theatre: he has represented India in foreign lands as a representative of art and culture.

An intellectual playwright whose work has the tone and expression of a great Drama. He has the genius and the power to transform any situation into an aesthetic experience the quality of which to use Joyce’s vocabulary would be static rather than kinetic (Kurkoti, D. Kirtinath contemporary Indian Drama Indian Drama collection of papers. 108). (Kirtinath, 1974,108).

Cyrus Mistry, another playwright who has written plays like Doongaji House and The Legacy of Rage, in which Doongaji House in 1978 won the second Sultan Padamsee award. The play shows the life of a Parsi family living in Bombay and their declining fortune. His other latest play The Legacy of Rage deals with the Christian community.

Dina Mehta is also an award winning playwright. Her play Brides Are Not for Burning got an international award from the B.B.C in 1979. She has written other plays like Getting away with Murder, Sister like you (1996). Her play Brides are not for Burning shows issue related to social problems of dowry and harassment of brides which they have to face for not bringing enough dowry. Her Sister like You (1996) shows domestic violence. Her plays are short listed for various playwrighting competitions.

A noteworthy playwright and a successor of Girish Karnad is Mahesh Dattani. He is the first Indian English playwright who received the Sahitya Akademi Award. He is a very versatile personality in theatre, a drama teacher, stage director, actor and Bharatnatyam exponent. He is director,
playwright, actor, producer and the founder of a theatre group ‘PLAYPEN’. He is among those playwrights who can easily explore the life of contemporary urban Indian society and analyse the clash between tradition and modernity. He has written many plays Final Solution and other Plays 1994, Collected Plays 2000. Where There’s Will 1986, Dance Like a Man, Bravely Fought the Queen, Tara, Collected Plays comprises six full length plays and two radio plays.

Dattani’s drama complements Karnad’s in that mythology and history are Karnad’s favourite subjects, while Dattani is preoccupied with social and political realities in India today... (Mee,2001,206).

He has written on many themes like the Indian joint family system and its impact, the plight of women in Indian society, homosexuality etc. He also writes about the oppressed or the marginalized class like minorities, women gays, hijaras etc. He has enriched Indian English drama and wants to give more opportunity to the new voice of contemporary era.

Vijay Tendulkar was born in 1828, and is a journalist by profession. He started his career as a creative writer, he wrote short stories, and later children’s plays, and screenplay writing. But his genius can be seen in his creative writing and drama. His First play was Grihasth in 1955, and after it he has written many plays which depict different aspects of human life. His play Chimanicha Ghor hote menache (1960) Kal ojarichi Shalai (1968), Ek Holti Mugli (1967) deals with the exploitation of individual. In another play Silence! The court is in session (1968) and Ghasiram kotwal (1972) the theme of oppression is shown. Sakharam Binder (1972) deals with human violence. Kamala (1982) and Kanyadan (1982) shows marital
Indian English Drama: An Introduction

status and it is also based on theme of exploitation and the second one 
*Kanyadan* shows cultural and emotional up and down of a family.

In his plays Tendulkar deals with many themes. He shows the agonies and suffering suffocations and cries of man; they also focus on middle class society. He shows theme of isolation and violence in individual, in most of his plays.

Commenting on Vijay Tendulkar, one can say

.........His plays vary from purely naturalistic plays and stark tragedies to farces, from musical set in traditional folk modes to absurd drama, from full length plays to one act. Thematically, his plays have ranged from the alienation of the modern individual to contemporary politics, from social individual tensions to complexities of human character........ (Dharan,1999,26).

Hence, Tendulkar is one who is associated with new theatrical movement in Maharashtra. He is said to be both a venerated and a controversial figure in modern Indian theater.

Badal Sarcar is another known name in the field of contemporary theatre. In India, he represents the New Theatrical Movement. He is among those playwrights who write on different themes. He is the one who created Puple’s Theatre and later established in 1967 his theatre group called ‘Satabdi’. His plays include *Solution x, Evan Inderjit* (1962), *That Other History* (1964), *There is No End* (1971) and further, he wrote plays like *Parykonodin, Jaldi Aur Ek Baar, Palap* and *Pagla Ghoda, Procession, Bhoma and Stale News*. His plays are based on different themes; political, social psychological and existential problems have been depicted. His play ‘Procession’ is about a ‘real home’ and *Bhoma* shows
the life of peasants in India. *Evan Inderjit* is about the playwright and his struggle in writing plays. He is a prestigious name in the field of Indian English Drama.

Another dramatist who comes in this category is Mohan Rakesh, who writes in Hindi but his works have been translated into English and other regional languages. He has published many plays on different themes. He deals with different aspects of human life. His plays include *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* in 1958, *Leharon Ke Raj Hansa* 1963, *Adhe Adhure* 1969, *Tale ki Zamin* which was later completed by Kamleshwar. He deals with different aspects of human life like the crises of contemporary man. His play *Leharon Ka Rajhans* shows the problem of relations between man and woman, *Adhe Adhure* deals with the life of husband wife and their ego clash; he has made many an experiment in theatre. He thinks drama to be a complex art involving in itself various other skills. With him there are other playwrights whose work cannot be ignored like Mahaswetadevi and Usha Ganguli. Mahaswetadevi is among those playwrights who want to find out something new and creative and has written five plays *Mother of 1084*, *Aajer Urvashi o’ Johny*, *Byen* and water. In her plays she deals with different aspects like *The Play Mother of 1084*, shows a mother who has seen the horror of Naxalite movement. In *Aajir*, deterioration of society is shown; reality of women’s life is shown in *Byen*.

All these playwrights contributed to the field of drama to make it more versatile and authentic. The work of all writers, from pre-independence to post independence era, shows that drama in Indian is full of variety and many talented writers with the passage of time, have made it an acknowledged branch of knowledge.
Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright

The attempt to focus on Nissim Ezekiel’s life, personality and experiences is relevant to establish a blend of tradition and modernity in his creativity that has a bearing on the quasi-consciousness of his background. This may help this study to be more revealing and authentic in its explorations of the thematic concerns of the writer.

Nissim Ezekiel who is known as the father of post independence Indian verse in English is a poet, critic and playwright. In the 1990s he was a Professor of English and American literature at Bombay University. He worked also as secretary of the Indian branch of the international writers’ organization, PEN. A versatile man who has played many roles is at the same time, prolific dramatist, poet, critic, broadcaster and social commentator.

...Nissim Ezekiel is without doubt, one of the best of the post-Independence Indo-Anglian writers. Forthright and unaffected, precise in his diction, even the careful craftsman, he has set certain standards that few others have been able to attain. (Karnani, 1975, 165).

Ezekiel was born in December, 1924 in Bombay, in a Bene Israel family, which was Jewish. His parents were highly qualified and devoted to education. His father was professor of Botany and Zoology and principal of several colleges. His mother was principal of her own school. So, right from birth he had an atmosphere which inspired him and motivated his upbringing and shaped his personality.

In an interview, he himself commented:

I’ve never experienced any conflict between my role as poet and as critic/teacher. I enjoy and love all these roles. My father was a professor of Botany and Zoology, my mother was
a primary school teacher with Marathi as the medium. Teaching was in my blood, so to speak. (Sharma,1995,43).

In his lifetime he has published many literary articles and reviews in different magazines and periodicals. He has had various careers throughout his life time. He was a brilliant student and held several academic records. He got first division in M.A. Examinations in English literature in the Bombay University, in 1947 and won a R.K. Lagu Prize. In 1947-48 he taught English literature at Khalsa College, Mumbai and published literary articles. He studied philosophy at Birkbeck College. He worked as a deck-scrubber abroad a cargo ship carrying arms to Indo-China. Later, he became an active member of the Radical Democratic Party. This is because of his coming in contact with the M.N. Roy. He later went to England in 1948 November and their tried a hand at various careers like theatre, cinema, art, co psychology and modern Indian Culture. But, he was mainly interested in the literature. In 1952, he published his first book of poetry, *A Time to Change* and then he came back to India and joined the Illustrated Weekly of India as an assistant editor for two years. Then he worked as a broadcaster on art and literature for the Bombay station of all India Radio for ten years. In November, 1952 and next year in December 1953 he came up with his second book of verse *Sixty poems*. Next year in 1954 he worked with an advertising company as a copywriter. But finally, he came back to his academic career and retired as a professor of American literature from Bombay University. In 1960 *The Unfinished Man* was published. With this he had contributed in many other areas; he co-founded the literary monthly in 1961 and become an art critic with The Times of India (1964-66) and also edited *Poetry India*. In 1965 he published *The Exact* a book of
poetry. He was also a visiting professor at the University of Leeds and University of Chicago. Later in 1969 he came up with his three plays which were published by Calcutta Writers Workshop. In 1976 he translated poetry from Marathi. He also co-edited a fiction, poetry anthology *Another India*. Then he mostly devoted his time to writing poetry. He also contributed in the field of plays, art criticism, short stories, columns and articles and hundreds of reviews. He has also written some essays which appeared in selected prose, especially *Naipaul’s India and Mine*.

Ezekiel received the Sahitya Akademi cultural award in 1983 and the Padma Shri in 1988. Nissim Ezekiel (b.1924) happens to be one of the most productive talents and most distinguished poetic personalities of modern India.

His works include.

**Books by Nissim Ezekiel**

*Time to Change* - 1952
*Sixty poems* - 1953
*The Third* - 1959
*The Unfinished Man* - 1960
*The Exact Name* - 1965
*The Three Plays* - 1969
*Hymns in Darkness* - 1977
*Latter day Psalms* - 1983

**Poems**
*The Patriot*
*Night of the Scorpion*
*The Professor*
*Case Study*
Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright

Enterprise
Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher
Background Casually
Poster Prayers

**Book edited**
The Emerson Reader
A Martin Luther King Reader
Indian Writers in Conference
Writing in India

**Journals edited**
Quest 1954-57
Imprint 1962-69
Poetry of the Commonwealth 1965
Poetry India 1966-67
The Indian P.E.N 1972
World Poets in English 1974

**Plays**
Nalini -1969
Marriage Poem -1969
The Sleepwalkers -1969
Song of Deprivation-1969
Who Needs no Introduction-1969
The Wonders of Vivek -1986
A Family Failure- 1986
Don’t Call it Suicide -1993

After a prolonged battle with Alzheimer’s disease Nissim Ezekiel passed away in Mumbai on Jan 9, 2004 at the age of 79. A doyen of Indian English
Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright

Literature, Nissim Ezekiel will be always remembered as a versatile writer. Though the present study concentrates on the plays yet in the Indian dramatic poet Ezekiel we can trace a subtle thematic unity of traditional and modern experimental fervor. A brief assessment of his poetry may offer a more substantial approach to analyze the themes of his plays as a combination of old and new ideologies.

In Ezekiel’s poetry one can find loneliness, lust, creativity and political pomposity, human foibles and ‘kindered clamour’. In his poetry we also find the post-war movement of England, Ironic voice in poetry moves from strict meter to free verse. Most of his poetry was based on or shows urban India, issues of alienation, love, marriage and sexuality.

His poem The Night of the Scorpion shows his mastery of free verse. His Unfinished Man and Exact Name show a break with the past. The Night of the Scorpion shows his views about the common Indian reality; in this poem he shows his personal voice. He is the one who has invented the idiom and metric of Post-Independence Indian English verse Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher shows his search for poetics. Hymns in Darkness show his concern for the nature of religious experience. In Marriage poem one can find the excitement of romantic love.

……Ezekiel has been a ceaseless experimentalist with both form and content, he is unquestionable a “modern” Indian English poet who has, through his admirable work, brought about a stylistic revolution in the domain of creative writing and a fresh social awareness among the people of this multidimensional and multicultural country. (Dwivedi, 1992, 434).
In some of his poems one can find the autobiographical element like his *The Night of the Scorpion* or *The Way It Went*. At the same time, in some of his poems he uses the Radha Krishna Myth in which he reveals his own sexual reverie. He has also written on city life, basically because he hails from Bombay. His many poems are based on city life, *The Unfinished Man*, *A Morning Walk* shows how the city of Bombay is like a barbaric city, sick with slums due to poverty. In these poems one can find the effective use of rhyme and music. He is a poet who has admitted that he is unable to identify himself with free India.

One of the distinctive qualities of Ezekiel is his use of Indian English with which he can explore the Indian mind and sensibility. In the late 1940s he used formal and correct English which was criticized by others because it was associated with the colonialism, but in 1965 he started experimenting with Indian English. He is a Jew by birth and he deals with poetry as an outsider. After Joseph Furtado, he is the only poet who used the ‘babu’ English in his work. But he effortlessly Indianized the English language; this can be seen in his poems like *Good -bye Party for Miss Pushpa T S* and *The Professor*.

He is a poet who shows in his work the reality of everyday life. He took themes from the surrounding and common life. Most of his work shows the reality. His poems and other works are based on real life as is said in one of the articles on Ezekiel.

_Ezekiel successfully captures the mainstream of Indian reality with striking elegance and charm and his pan Indian sensibility and outlook lend his poetry both originality and authenticity._ (Want, 2004, 116).
Skaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright

Ezekiel can be identified with his Indian sensibility. In many of his poems he uses Indian English like in ‘very Indian poems in Indian English’ and he shows a particular Indian attitude by his use of continuous present tense.

The Indian landscape scars, my eyes I have become a part of it. (Benson, 1994, 478).

His contribution could not be ignored as Salil Tripathi comments:

Nissim Ezekiel gave English poetry space in the crowded Indian literary landscape. A poet writing about urban alienation, he articulated the anxiety of so many educated middle class Indians. His pioneering efforts created the room in which later generations of poets were to thrive. (Tripathi, 2004, www.newstateman.com).

Later he became the mentor for younger poets like Dom Moraes and Adil Jussawalla, Gieve Patel. He helped many Mumbai poets in the last few years of his life. As a poet Ezekiel has shown remarkable dedication. He is the one Indian English poet who shows his ability by contributing his own experience to the world. He is very sincere about his works and this is the real strength of his work. In the second half of the 20th century there are poets who inaugurated the modernist revolution in Indian poetry in English, and Ezekiel is known to be at the centre of this group. And in this version of the history of Indian verse, when he returned to India in 1952, from London where he lived up to 1948, he brought a poetic with him which challenged the lyrical romanticism of proceeding generations of Indian poets. He followed the European modernist masters such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound due to their dedication towards finding objective correlative for subjective emotions and abstract ideas.
Besides poetry he has contributed in different fields. Ezekiel essayed many roles with envy and grace: poet, editor, art critic, playwright, teacher and a literary organizer. He spent twenty years as an academician. For some time he worked as manager in Chemould, a frame making establishment which later becomes the leading art gallery of Bombay. He worked in advertising broadcasting and publishing. He also wrote some plays that were performed on the Bombay stage. He also wrote art criticism, many literary reviews and edited many periodicals such as ‘Quest’, ‘Imprint’, ‘Poetry India’ and ‘The India PEN Quarterly’.

Ezekiel is a versatile genius. Besides being a poet of foremost importance, he is very good art critic, journalist and a distinguished teacher of English literature. He has been editing P.E.N. with distinction. He is a widely travelled man and has delivered lectures and given poetry readings in America, Australia and England . . . . In collaboration with Vrinda Nabar, a Marathi Scholar he has also translated Marathi poems into English . . . . (Sharma,1995,11).

The process of creativity free and unending phenomenon, hence which found expression in Ezekiel’s urge to extend and elaborate his area of interest in his conscious choice of playwrighting. His plays were also contributions to the modern techniques of theatre and theoretical traditions of Indian Drama. A comprehensive note on the themes of the plays is given here which deals in detail in the following sections of the study on the plays of Ezekiel.

Nissim Ezekiel is primarily a poet who added diversity to his creative ventures by writing his Three plays. He contributed in the field of drama by Three plays in 1969. He himself humbly admitted that he is a greater poet than a playwright.
I can sense no real influence in my plays, as i can in my poetry. (Sharma,1995,29).

There is some reason which prompted a poet like Ezekiel to write plays as he himself said about his indulgence in playwright.

I became interested in the theatre through my association with E. Alkazi and his work in Bombay’s theatre Group. Later, we formed the theatre unit to write plays became at that time a dream for me and to some extent it is still a dream. (Sharma,1995,29).

But one cannot ignore his contribution in the field of drama. His plays depict the reality of life and are a reflection and criticism of contemporary conditions. They disclose trivialities, permissiveness, consumerism and absurdities.

As a poet, Ezekiel has not only made a niche for himself but has also contributed significantly to making Indo- English poetry a force to reckon with. Whether the same could be said of his plays is perhaps, a moot point...... (Sharma, 1995,87).

He has written six plays like Three plays 1969 which consisted of Nalini, Comedy in Three Acts, Marriage Poem, One Act Tragic-comedy the one act Sleepwalker’s Indo-American farce, Song of Deprivations Comic morality, Who Needs no Introduction and Don’t Call it Suicide, a socio-psychological analysis of suicide. Ezekiel said about his plays in one of the interview.

‘No, I cannot find a specific “message” in my plays, but I feel there are ideas in them which add to their dramatic value. (Sharma,1995,29).

In his plays one can find the themes which focus on hollow-middle class life in cities and the social institution of marriage. He basically focuses on
the urban man and his problem. In his plays we find the recurrence of the themes associated with the middle class man and his suffering.

There are many techniques which are used by Ezekiel in his plays to treat various themes. All his plays focus on the Modern Man and revolve around their problems. Ezekiel doesn’t have any dramatic theory. He approaches drama mainly as a performance. One of his remarks reveals his idea about dramatic theory.

I can’t claim again, to have a whole dramatic theory. I believe that plays are written for performance and not only for reading. Therefore, they must have a strong theatrical element, that is all. The interest of the audience must be sustained, not only by the dialogue but by the movements, the action, the events that happen within the plot or story. (Sharma, 1995, 30).

In his plays one can find the comic or satiric element. He makes satire on everything which can be clearly seen in his plays. In Nalini, he has satirized the life of two advertising executives and their profession, in The Sleepwalkers he comments on the Indian people’s habit of always looking up to America. In his plays, he exposes the reality of various professions. His characters are real. As Ezekiel says:

Yes I feel my characters are living, but I don’t like to make claim for my work. It is for the critics to decide. (Sharma, 1995, 30).

His characters are urban men living in city, busy life. His characters talk like real people. He shows many techniques in his plays which add up to the dramatic quality of his plays. He uses inner conflict in his plays. The conversation is very informal, there is self contradiction within the characters, and Ezekiel also employs the dream technique. Technique of
mask is also used. He employed all devices of diametric opposition which was not used before so effectively.

Between thoughtlessness and intellect there is not only a conflict but also a diametric opposition. This paradigm is dear to the playwright. And this has not found expression in Indo English drama so prominently before Ezekiel. . . . . . . (Sharma,1995,92).

He is a modern playwright; hence he concentrates on the problem of the modern man. He avoids artificiality in his plays.

. . . . . . . This return to nature and the normal is Ezekiel's chief contribution to Indo-English theatre. Even if he uses masks, they fall off at the proper time revealing the unreality of pose. . . (Sharma,1995,91).

All his plays mark his indebtedness to the English dramatist Bernard Shaw; we find the mouthpiece of the dramatist in the character. Ezekiel finds women equal in status to men. Like Bernard Shaw, Ezekiel has also projected the ‘new women’ in his plays like Nalini and Marriage Poem. While making comment on Ezekiel’s plays, Meenakshi Raja said, to Prema Nanda Kumar,

Their stage worthiness apart, the plays make pleasant reading matter, for Mr. Ezekiel handles this tool, the English language with polished expertise. (Bhatta,1987,147).

Ezekiel’s plays provide an example as they are symmetric in construction. He used irony, parallelism, wit and humour and treats hackneyed themes in Ezekielian manner. His plays focus on his sharp observation of the oddities in human life and behaviour; they provide glimpses of a cross-section of contemporary society, and his plays are just situations. In this regard Santan Rodrigues comments.
He is an excellent craftsman. The plays are merely theatrical plots without drama. Most of the action is infect in action the real happening relegated to the arena of the readers mind. . . . it is Ezekiel the playwright laughing at the characters and through them at the world around him. The characters seldom grow beyond caricatures. Only in Nalini does Ezekiel succeed in going beyond the farcical. Otherwise these are only drawing room plays about the banality and banter of life. (Anklesaria, 2008, 112).

In his plays one can find the freshness and willingness to experiment with new techniques and also a real hope for Indian drama in English. About the technique of his plays he himself said in an interview with Nilufer E. Bharucha,

Ezekiel: No, I would say that I took a kind of straight forward, comparatively simple attitude towards the writing of the plays. And there is nothing much by the way of the experimental or the absolutely original or anything like that it is just about coping with their main concepts, and the main characters and their problems and relationships plus whatever are been introduced by way of humour and seriousness. That’s about all. It doesn’t have the larger ambitions like some really original plays. I’ve never written a play like that. (Bharucha, 1998, 33).

His three plays include Nalini: a Comedy in Three Acts. It is a play about two young advertising executives and a painter Nalini. Raj and Bharat who are advertising executive want to hold an exhibition of her paintings, but they are not really interested in the exhibition. Both have their hidden motive. And Nalini has the double personality of an artist, half woman, and half-Omniscient with the eyes of God. In this play, Ezekiel shows the modern man and their problem who suffers from hollow life, alienation
and identity crisis. They are unable to identify themselves with India. Whereas Nalini who comes as a dream Nalini of Bharat and in the end, rejects the false notion of Bharat and Raj.

. . . . . Nalini concerns itself with precisely that class of westernized Indians who were then beginning to express their guilt about being without roots. Both the plays protagonists belong to this class . . . . . (Mehrotra,2003,344).

**Marriage poem:** A Tragi-comedy explores the life of a married couple who have an unhappy married life. Both Naresh and Mala are married but due to extra marital relationships their married life is a wreck. Mala longs for the love of her husband who has a relationship with Leela, and Naresh is torn between marital duty and extra marital relationship. In this play Ezekiel shows how extra-marital relation can destroy the happiness of married life *Marriage Poem* is described as,

*Marriage poem* shines like a polished gem, but in a very small setting. It explores an upper middle class marriage in which the homebound wife craves the attention and love of a husband who, if he ever loved her, is now indifferent. The insecurity of her position drives her to alternate between nagging him and trying to seduce him . . . . . . . (Mehrotra,2003,344).

The third play is *The Sleepwalkers* in which Ezekiel shows the Indian attitude towards America. He presents an American couple who come to India for the publicity of their magazine and how all the Indian guest try to impress the couple as the play begins with a chant.

*Give us this day our daily American.* (Ezekiel,1969,84).

In this play Ezekiel satirizes; characters are seen in a mask, and they all act and behave like sleepwalkers.
Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright

*The Sleepwalkers*, although a farce, is tautly constructed; it demands much; it presents a subtle criticism of American and Indian society, eerily snobbish and relentlessly tense . . . . (Gowda, 1998, 526).

His other play *Song of Deprivation* is a comic morality in one act; it is for the non-existent underground theatre in India. The play contains two characters only he and she. It is a small play with two small rooms. It describes the plight of the modern man who is deprived of privacy. Another play *Who Needs no Introduction* is about a professional politician who addresses the youth in a seminar on young Generation. Another play *Don’t Call it Suicide* (1993) it is a domestic tragedy of death, guilt, remorse and atonement. It centers on the isolation of a hypersensitive individual in a tough world.
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Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright


Shaping of Nissim Ezekiel as a Playwright


CHAPTER II

Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives
Nissim Ezekiel’s play *Nalini* is a three act comedy which deals in depth with the life of an urban Indian man and woman. This play was written in 1968 and published in 1969 by the Writers Workshop. Ezekiel’s *Three Plays* (1969) including *Nalini*: A comedy, *Marriage poem*: A Tragi-comedy and *The Sleepwalkers*: An Indo-American Farce are considered to be a welcome addition to the dramaturgy of Indian English drama. Of the three, *Nalini* is generally considered the most successful and also the most important play. *Nalini* which is known to be first play by Ezekiel was first produced in Marathi and first performed in January 1969 by a theatre group and further in January 1969, the play was staged in Bombay in Marathi translation at Jai Hind College Hall, directed by Atmaram Bhende. In December 1969, *Nalini* was staged in English at Tejpal Auditorium, directed by Georgina Shaw and Francoise Bocquet, and further it was staged in March 1985, directed by Toni Patel at Cymroza Art Gallery, in April 18, 1985, at the Little Theatre, in April 22, 1985 at Alliance Francaise, Bombay. It proved to be a great success on the stage and was also appreciated by large groups of theatre audiences who were able to relate themselves with the essence of this drama. As Ezekiel admitted to P. Bayapa Reddy,

\[\text{I have not yet written plays substantial enough to be considered in terms of bad good, better, best and worst}\]
The play *Nalini* is open to more than one interpretation. This play is more than a comedy and has an interesting story and intricate plot, scope for spectacle and uses modern dramatic devices to bring it more near to the life of the common people and audience who watch the play. The audience were able to enjoy this drama as it portrayed the realistic picture of the society which made it more striking and interesting to the audiences. It reflected the authentic state of the complex life of metropolitan middle class men and women, and Ezekiel has also put forward the social satire to which theatre audience responded readily.

*Nalini* is an interesting social satire which presents a contrast between dream and reality, between the ethereal and the substantial. It depicts the unauthentic life of two advertising executives Bharat and Raj. Ezekiel does his best to dramatize the real condition of contemporary life style. *Nalini* is Ezekiel's most theatrically appreciated play and is based on personal experiences and observations. As an art critic of the Times of India and manager in Shilpi Advertising, he was familiar with art exhibition of painters like Malini, and the ostentatious world of business executives. Regarding this Ezekiel comments in one of his interviews,

Ezekiel: But that is the point of the playwright’s interest. If the playwright’s interest are limited and he really does not know anything about the world

......If I had created advertising executive or if I had created an art critic and knew nothing about them.....Then putting them into a play would be a hopeless proposition. (Patel, www.mumbaitheatreguide.com).
Thus the play Nalini is the result of the direct intellectual observation of life by the playwright and his artistic imagination. The end of all these means is manifestly the realization of emotional pleasure by the spectators. Ezekiel says:

. . . . Every dramatist would like his work staged, otherwise you would feel you are a failure. . . . (Anklesaria, 2008, 63).

The play clearly brings out the lifestyle and mindset of modern advertising executives and their farcical life which is full of meaninglessness and bare ideas. Ezekiel projects two pictures of the trivial world of the young executives and the contrast between the two-Nalini, the one of the dream and the other of reality. Ezekiel’s approach and dealing is instinct with unconventionalism. Ezekiel employs satire as a powerful weapon thereby presenting an alarmingly pragmatic picture of present day India. He satirises artists and their art. Regarding this it is apt to say:

Nalini exposes the superficiality and mediocrity of two advertising executives fantasizing about the beauty of the women they seek to seduce. Nalini, a painter and their client proves tougher and more insightful than her fantasized image as she exposes the lack of values in the executives...... (Benson, 1994, 385).

Nalini is the most acknowledged of Ezekiel’s achievement as a playwright. The play has a symmetrical layout in three acts with three characters. The play provides appropriate social criticism, using irony, wit and satire skilfully to expose the conceit of urban middle class. It proves itself to be theatrically vital. The playwright employs certain audio-visual devices which make the play unforgettablely powerful on the stage. There are only three characters in the play. It has a tautly knit structure with a good
beginning, a good middle and a good ending. The entire action is woven around one central figure Nalini. It moves from reality to fantasy and again back to reality. The encounter of two successful modern advertising executives with a diffident young painter becomes the central incident in the play. In this context it will be apt to point out that:

The play has always seemed limited by the very limited world it portrays, it is interesting as a glimpse of a slice of life, perhaps but would have been more so if Ezekiel’s dramatic output had been more prolific so that what was witnessed here was part of a wider spectrum. If the function of drama is chiefly to represent, then Nalini performs its limited function adequately. But it is too isolated a reality, one that holds only a marginal interest........ (Pandey, 1990, 76).

The playwright’s clear vision of the human world is revealed in this play. In Nalini, Ezekiel has delved below the surface to reveal the reality of the current way of life in India. In the first act, Bharat and Raj are presented; in the second act we meet Bharat with the two Nalinis the first one imaginary or dream Nalini and the other, real Nalini. In the act third, Raj and Bharat are in the aftermath of Bharat’s encounter with Nalini. The playwright unmasks the despicable tricks employed by the illusory advertising agent and an intrepid resistance put forward by a genuine artist.

The play is a beautiful blend of the old and the new, dream and reality and of traditional and modernistic value systems, and of all those contrarieties which constitute the present day human life of complexities and difficulties. Tabish Khair says,
...Ezekiel’s plays belong to and help inaugurate another tradition, a more consciously modern one... (Anklesaria, 2008,540).

_Nalini_ only claims to show a “slice of life” and not the entire gamut of experiences. Its innovative theatre techniques and devices are used in the play by Ezekiel.

.......Ezekiel like Bernard Shaw and writers of social realism gives an elaborate stage direction visualising his plays as a thing to be seen not merely to be read....... (Iyer,2007,72).

It is modern as it employs modern dramatic techniques. Ezekiel has also adapted some ideas from contemporary drama and the influence of modern dramatic techniques can be found out in the play.

. . . . . .In its dialogue based approach to the discussion of ideas, its quips and one liners and its exploration of the ‘modern’ (Indian) woman, it carries faint echoes of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw. . . . .(Anklesaria,2008,545).

The play _Nalini_, up to some extent, depicts conventional modes. Ezekiel displays the myth of “Sitas and Savitris” who are regarded as a cultural guides to Indians and relates it to the modern Nalini. This allows the reader to see clearly the fusion of the modern and the traditional woman. Even the name of Bharat which is “India” and Raj display some authorities and are suggestive and establish a relationship with the traditional Indian ethos. All the characters are deeply rooted within the Indian culture. Ezekiel seems to acclimatize some techniques from modern western drama, and also borrows ideas from the theorist of post-colonial criticism Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. In Nalini their theory can be aptly fitted as it deals with post colonial experience and its after-crisis. _Nalini_ explores
up to some extent the ideas of all western theorists. Ezekiel’s plays have freshness and a willingness to experiment new techniques; his approach and treatment are full of unconventionalism. Karnani comments,

In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of pose and pretence, he comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirists in the theatre. Like them, he gives elaborate stage directions, visualising his plays as a thing not meant to be read but to be seen. This gives a certain totality of effect which cannot be imagined in cold print. (Dwivedi, 1999, 126).

_Nalini_ is both traditional and experimental. Ezekiel is conscious of the tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of western modes of thought and our own traditions. Ezekiel clearly displays in _Nalini_ the effect of colonial rule on a country’s future-economic, social and cultural development which is both far reaching and extensive and may contrive in the present. The remarkable quality that distinguishes him from other writers is his sharp awareness of shift in values that has been taking place in post colonial India. He understands that the clash of values stems naturally from,

_A nostalgic idealization of tradition and a compulsive urge for modernity..... (Kumar, 1978, 85)._

This fusion of modern and traditional in the play _Nalini_ is due to Ezekiel’s own sensibility which is fusion of the two cultures. He has a double impulse of being a native and an alien, at the same time; he belongs to the period of transition in which the values of modernism have paved the way for post-modernism in our country. As reflected by Ezekiel,

_I have never wholly identified myself with “the Indian sensibility” nor do I feel alienated from it now. I have always
believed that I have a particular relationship with that sensibility which is part of my normal life. . . . . (Reddy,1990,17).

His plays are reflections on contemporary conditions which reveal among other things trivialities, permissiveness, consumerism and absurdities. He treats hackneyed themes in Ezekielian manner—irony, parallelism, wit and humour. *Nalini* is a direct attack on the concept of modernity. In his plays he does not imply any dramatic theory but borrows ideas abundantly. Regarding this, he himself admits,

I can’t claim, again, to have a whole dramatic theory. I believed that plays are written for performance and not only for meaning. Therefore they must have a strong theatrical element that is all the interest of the audience must be sustained, not only by the dialogue but by the movements, the action, and events that happen within the plot or story. (Reddy,1990,16).

In *Nalini*, Ezekiel tries to evolve a sharp social satire and post-colonial consciousness and a living response to life and its values. Ezekiel’s sensibility is fine and he is deeply affected by the creator in him. He is not exclusively linked to the western philosophical matrix as has been the criterion taken by some critics. Ezekiel’s deep reverence for his native tradition of drama does not proceed from any ideological or nationalistic agenda. It will be quite pertinent to quote in this context,

. . . .Indian literature was becoming more preoccupied with immediate Indian reality. Neither the east nor the west could provide effective models for this. Realism and naturalism of the native variety were being discovered and explored. Marxism and Freudianism percolated in discreet doses. . . . (Jain,2000,142).
Ezekiel is among those playwrights who have been shaped by modernist and postmodern traditions of existentials, absurdist, environmental and historical myth. Their work is clearly concerned with the precolonial past and the post colonial present rather than the experience of colonialism. The forms and institutions of performance were, therefore, borrowed but the content of the colonial theatre became deeply embedded in Indian myth, history, literature, society and politics.

This chapter focuses on Ezekiel’s blending of tradition and modernity in every form of depiction at the level of theme, characterization, language and dramatic devices. Indian is the element of the play as setting and environment of the play is urban. The whole text presents before us a fine example of tradition as well as modernity. This study proposes to interpret the play *Nalini* at a different level and to find out the element of modernity as well as traditionality in it.

The play exhibits the hypocrisy of the two young advertising executives. The plot of the play opens with their conversation about saint or non-saint. They discuss about the exhibition of Nalini’s paintings. As their dialogue reveals,

**Bharat:** Pascal says that the sum of evil in the world would be much diminished if men could only learn to sit quietly in their rooms......... (*Nalini*, Act 1, 9).

**Bharat:** Men are never saints with women (*Nalini*, Act 1, 10).

In the first Act the hollowness of the advertising executive who is leading a life which has no meaning, is presented. They both have no real knowledge about art; yet they chose this profession just to promote
themselves. The conversation is full of wit and humour. They discuss about the exhibition of Nalini’s paintings but in reality they have no knowledge, as Raj says,

Raj: ..........Does that matter? They are paintings, canvases with colour on them, plenty of colour in various forms. They don’t represent anything............... (Nalini,Actl,11).

Ezekiel’s Nalini deals with the problem of identity crisis which is one of the causes of post-colonial disorientation. Fanon says in this context.

........The first step towards a post colonial perspective is to reclaim ones own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialisit ideology by which that past had been devalued............ (Barry,2007,192).

As both Raj and Bharat live in India so in their characters one can find the effects of colonization. Bharat says,

Bharat: ..........Who are we? What do we matter in the India that is being shaped around us? Who cares for us and our ideas? What have I to offer to anyone............... (Nalini,Actl,15).

In Act I, Ezekiel present sarcasm on the modern man again and again Bharat and Raj comment on their identity and they are unable to identify themselves with anything authentic.

Bharat: ..........But what are we? Liberal, modern, advanced, progressive Indians? Are we Indians? And if we are not Indians, what are we? (Nalini,Actl,16)

They both discuss about the exhibition of Nalini’s painting by portraying two advertising executives Ezekiel directs his satire on the whole post-colonial urban Indian society. Ezekiel comments on art and artists and on
people who go abroad and comeback without going any real knowledge or output. In Act II, Nalini enters the scene. She is,

Slender and sweet, tall, fair, completely mod in style, her hair done up in a bee-hive, her Choli short, low cut and backless, revealing a figure of same splendour............ (Nalini, Act II, 25).

Bharat encounters the dream Nalini who behaves according to Bharat’s desire. She is ready to surrender to Bharat’s futile ideas. She acts according to Bharat’s wish, but in the same act the real Nalini appears and she is different from the dream Nalini of Bharat, in appearance as well as in ideas.

............She is soberly dressed though with a strong hint of sensuality in her person. She is shorter and less slender............. (Nalini, Act III, 30).

The whole second act interprets the character of Nalini and through her the meaningless life of Bharat and Raj. Through the character of Nalini, Ezekiel brings forth the modern Indian woman and the feminist perspective before us. In the real sense she is an independent woman who is conscious of her dignity, values and moralities. She rejects the romantic advances of Bharat and exposes him. Ezekiel has brought out realism through the voice of Bharat. Nalini comments,

Nalini: ......Real to me! How can you be till you’re real to yourself? (Nalini, Act II, 37).

Ezekiel conveys the idea of feminist perspective or self realization through the character of Nalini.

Nalini: ......it is freedom, which includes the freedom to create something new........The evolution of the other
Ezekiel has brought out the dramatic beauty of the play by applying different theatrical devices which make the play more influencing on the stage. In act III the playwright reveals that there is character evolution Bharat and Raj both wait for Nalini even when she leaves them after exposing them their real self. Bharat, who is frustrated comments,

Bharat: ..........She’s an independent woman, with the intelligence of a man and the determination of an orthodox Indian mother-in-law.......... (Nalini, Act III, 45).

Ezekiel focuses on the meaningless life of Bharat and Raj and brings forward sharp social satire.

Bharat: another drink another girl, another party, another sales conference, another exhibition, another play to be produced.......... (Nalini, Act III, 47).

The notable features of this drama are the use of different themes and its theatrical devices which are very cleverly used by Ezekiel and conveyed to us. The idea we get is that the play is a hybridization of modern as well as traditional ideas. In the last act both Bharat and Raj are shown sitting, and they wait for Nalini who is never going to came back. In the end Ezekiel depicts will-oriented vitalism.

Bharat: We sit down quietly, and will her to come. (Nalini, Act III, P52).

Bharat and Raj can be compared with the two tramps of Waiting For Godot, who wait for something where there is nothing. Ezekiel conveys
his ideas and the effect of colonialism on the Indian, or rather the post-colonial Indian men very effectively.

In this section Ezekiel interprets the various themes and presents a blend of the modern as well as traditional elements in Nalini. The play is a modern one set up in a modern urban setting with all the characters belonging to same section contemporary middle class having modern attitudes and ideas. According to a theorist,

"In literature finally there was a rejection of traditional realism (chronological plots) continuous narrations relayed by omniscient narrators, closed endings etc. In favor of experimental forms of favour kinds........ (Barry, 2007, 82).

Nissim Ezekiel was a conscious practitioner of Post-modernist theory; he applied all the western theories in his plays. As Post-modernism is an attempt to break away from modernist forms, which has become conventional. The play depicts the characters’ mental conflicts, frustrations and dissatisfactions. Ezekiel portrays how the life of modern man is affected by urbanization and excessive modernization. The quest for identity is a post-modernist trend.

In the play Nalini, Ezekiel represents the idea of post-modernism as he is himself a modern dramatist and allows experimentation to run freely through his plays. There are many themes which are depicted by Ezekiel in the play like identity crisis, alienation, hollowness, interior or existential conflict, themes of disillusionment, post-colonialism which display the realistic picture of society and makes sarcastic comment on art and artists, and on modern Indian lifestyle and mindset. Regarding this Ezekiel says,
There is a satiric element in the plays, undoubtedly whether the satire is mild or sharp, I cannot say (I should not) I am certain only that there is more than satire, positive statements about life and human relationship.......... (Reddy,1990,15).

In *Nalini*, Ezekiel depicts the theme of Indian ethos against growing modernism and materialism. It is also based on the post-colonial theme and the effect of colonization can be traced in the play, due to which *Bharat* is unable to identify himself with India. He is conscious of his colonial past and wants to come out from this notion. As the focus of post-colonial theory is to draw attention on the past and present social milieu, a post colonial theorist says,

.........The first step towards a post colonial perspective is to reclaim one’s own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued...... (Barry,2007,192).

This longing for identity and interior conflict has a post-modernistic appeal. Ezekiel attempts to present before the reader and the spectator, the modern as well as traditional aspects. The play is modern as it allows innovation and experimentation at all the levels.

.........Modernity is a relative term. It signifies departure from the past and means essentially the projection of the contemporary values................. (Jain,2000,84).

But at the same time, traditional elements can also be found in the play. Ezekiel’s reference to mythological characters in the play reveals that he is conscious of the past and the traditional values attached to the Indian lifestyle, and one can never come up and reject the past. According to the post colonial theory, Fanon says,
First step towards a post perspective is to reclaim one’s own past. (Barry, 2007, p.192).

Bharat finds himself bound by the past but wants to overcome it. Ezekiel presents the example of Sita and Savitri to connect the past with the present.

Bharat: ...........It’s wonderful the new Indian women I meet, right here, in this city, are wonderful. They’re not all disgusting Sitas and Savitris ........ (Nalini, Act 1, p.14).

Ezekiel also deals with the issue of interior conflict. He attempts to analyze contemporary India and the life of modern urban middle-class man. The sustained interest of the play is due to subtle presence of intricate themes. The conflicting inner self is brought out through the character of Bharat, Raj, and Nalini. It is the worthlessness which is the main cause behind the interior conflict in the life of contemporary man. As such they are fighting a battle against themselves. Bharat and Nalini are presented to be leading the life of the divided self. They are unable to decide between right and wrong. As Moutushi Chakravartee comments,

........Nalini is a case in point but the real conflict in the play lies much deeper, it is an interior conflict where one encounters fractured selves of Bharat and Nalini.............. (Sharma, 1995, p.88).

Through the character of Bharat, Ezekiel wants to display a whole class that faces interior conflict. Bharat is divided into two, his own self and the outer self. He is suffering from loneliness and is also conscious of his colonial past and suffers lack of identity.

Bharat: And of the fact that we don’t live one life but many lives
Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives

Raj: I live only one life. It may be dull from your point of view, but it’s safer.

Bharat: I don’t think you live only one life. I think you live at least two lives, the public life and the inner life. *(Nalini, Act I, 18).*

Bharat himself is aware of his weaknesses.

Bharat: Explaining myself
Nalini: To me or to yourself
Bharat: To both
Nalini: and what do you propose to do, now that you’ve explained yourself to yourself and to me. *(Nalini, Act II, 35).*

Like Bharat, Nalini also experiences a split personality, she shows her bewilderment.

Nalini: I had experienced myself divided into two person......
Nalini: One person was the woman I am, the other person was........ another person......
Nalini: I looked at this other person with my eyes and she looked back at me with the eyes of God I realised she suffered from some unimaginable upheaval within her. She was alone, separated from humanity...... *(Nalini, Act II, 41).*

Nalini finds herself torn between her two selves like Bharat. This interior conflict in the characters is due to the effect of the past and some unresolved conflict. Frued said,

..........Repression, which is the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, un-admitted desire or traumatic past events so that they are forced out of conscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious.......... *(Barry, 2007, 7).*
The same notion is seen in Bharat who wants to overcome the effect of colonization. In this context, Freud’s theory can be applied to Bharat’s personality up to some extent.

The play also deals with the idea of alienation or isolation—an issue which can be associated with current India. It is the modern man who has to face alienation. Isolation can be due to social as well as cultural environment. Modern men like Bharat and Raj, living in a metropolitan city face loneliness and are forced to live a life of seclusion. One of the factors behind this segregation is culture. It is culture which constructs the identity of the people and which is the main factor behind the dislocation of identity and isolation of people. Another factor is social alienation of the individual.

R. Raj Rao writes,

........Alienation is a unifying theme that runs through all his plays........ (Pandey,1990,83).

Ezekiel’s background itself provides a copybook example of social and cultural alienation.

My background makes me a natural outsider circumstances and decisions relate me to India........ (Sharma,1995,2).

The reason behind this alienation is the writer’s own urban upbringing which makes him feel separated from the traditional, social, religious and cultural traditions of the masses. Another reason is general ethos of the post-independence age with its prevailing climate of opportunism and cynicism, which further tends to alienate the sensitive mind from the social set up. Also, is the strain and stress of modern living which often
tends to deepen social, cultural and religious alienation into existential alienation of varying degrees of intensity.

Alienation as a subject matter runs through all the plays of Nissim Ezekiel. Alienation of the individual from the social and cultural environment to which a person belongs becomes an important theme. In *Nalini*, Bharat and Raj both suffer from estrangement; Bharat cannot relate to people and surroundings, and also experiences a partial or total breakdown of communication which leads to a maladjusted and lonely life.

One of the important factors behind the alienation of an individual is culture. It is the main cause of loneliness and loss of identity. Different factors differentiate a person from another, such as race, habitat, dress, food, language and sensibility. Whites are regarded as superior to blacks; browns and yellows for e.g. in *Nalini*, after getting praise from an American only does Nalini decide to hold an exhibition of her paintings.

Another factor behind alienation is the natural habitat Bharat lives in metropolitan city, which is a cultural unit distinct from the village. In this context it can be said that,

...............This is so because the city is often. “The bizarre mixture of culture and nature” it is something fully knowable and not yet known......... (Naikar,2002,1).

It is the natural habitat and surrounding, of Bharat which is responsible for his predicament. Social alienation of the individual is yet another problem. All the characters in *Nalini* feel themselves socially alienated as they are displayed leading a life of boredom. Bharat is shown sitting still and commenting.
It is the consequence of his alienated circumstances that forces Bharat to become an advertising executive. Bharat candidly admits to Raj that he has become a promoter of art because it is the only thing he can do well; he cannot gainfully do any other work. It is the cultural and social aspect which becomes the main cause of alienation for Bharat. Bharat finds himself divided into two selves, his inner self and his public life.

Like Bharat, Nalini also finds herself divided into two: the everyday Nalini, unimaginative but surrounded by friends and is the creative Nalini who suffers from some unimaginable upheaval within her. She is alone, separated from humanity. The first Nalini describes the condition of the “second” as one of “madness”.

The social environment of the individual is responsible for making him alienated. Ezekiel presents an urban setting intentionally to represent the life of the modern urban man in the city. Life is busy and an individual has to face isolation from his own surroundings. Another factor is the culture due to which characters have to face alienation. Bharat is conscious of his own past and unable to relate himself with India. This is one of the factors responsible for his isolation. Ezekiel effectively deals with the causes which create the feeling of loneliness in the life of Bharat, Raj and Nalini and through them, wants to display the picture of the entire middle class of the Indian society.

The device of satire is used by Ezekiel in almost all his plays. Through this device he satirizes the plight of the modern man and comments on basic socio-cultural issues. M.H. Abrahms writes,
Satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it a ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation. (Abrams, 2009, 278).

Satire forms a prominent stylistic element in this play. It is visible all over, and cannot be missed. Through its use, the playwright expresses his intense dissatisfaction at the state of affairs and his anger at the sham being practiced by hypocrites. Satire brings out the co-existence of the mutually incompatible elements and forces, essential contradictions in the lives of people, pulling the mask off their faces and holding them up to ridicule.

Ezekiel aims a direct satire on the contemporary urban middle class men and women and their life style. He satirizes the artist and art critic through the character of the Bharat, Raj and Nalini. He intentionally places these characters in contemporary India. In this context Depika Sahai says,

...........The play, as we know, is a social satire on mere glitter, pomp and show of modernity. It is sarcasm on modern artists who feel that their art is not sufficient in itself to be praised, it needs publicity. (Pandey, 1990, 41).

Nalini is a wry commentary on the current art scene in India. The play, as we know, is a social satire on the glitter, pomp and show of modernity. It is also sarcasm on the so called liberal, modern, advanced men and women of progressive India. It is a scathing attack on the modern artists who become commercial and feel that their art is not adequate in itself to be praised, like Nalini. In the play Nalini is not much confident about her art and only after being praised by an American does she decide to hold
and exhibition of her paintings and wants to publicize them. So the first priority of the artist today is publicity. It is not the quality of the painting that matters but the right contacts. To quote a critic,

The play is a scathing attack on the artists who have become commercial rather than remaining pure artists, and also on art critics who have no knowledge about art............ (Pandey, 1990,40).

He further says,

............The technique of advertising is attacked. It is not art which is promoted these days but people.......... (Pandey, 1990,42).

Thus Nalini is a satire on the modern artist who becomes commercial and loses the real value of art. Ezekiel here, also comments on the art critic through the character of Bharat and Raj, who have no knowledge about art as they see no difference between Roger Fry and Christopher Fry. Raj says,

Raj:  Does that matter? They are paintings, canvases with colour on them, plenty of colours in various forms. They don’t represent anything..... (Nalini,Act1,11).

Ezekiel is sarcastic about these art critics throughout the play. They do not want to criticize and loose a friend, hence they indulge in false praise. They have no idea of art but are only snobs. There are ironical remarks in the play on art critics who judge a painting based not on its creativity or its shades and colour but its photographs. Bharat and Raj are not art critics in the real sense of the word, have no idea about the art of
painting, but thrive on contacts alone. The Exhibition is a vehicle for coming closer to Nalini as is revealed by Raj.

**Raj:** ........Who are we to criticize, anyway? What do we understand about painting? (*Nalini, Act I, 13*).

Ezekiel also satirizes the technique of advertising. It is not art which is promoted these days but a person, art is only a medium. Bharat prefers this profession because he has no other option. Due to his own experiences Ezekiel is able to bring the real picture of the world of art critics and techniques of advertising. It can be clearly predicted through Bharat’s dialogue.

**Bharat:** ........If she brings some photographs of her paintings, I’ll know what to write about them some tripe............... (*Nalini, Act I, 14*).

Ezekiel also makes fun of people who go abroad to earn false reputation.

**Raj:** You could go abroad and come back. They make better use of you when you go abroad and come back At least they pay you better. You need not learn anything abroad. Just go and come back............... (*Nalini, Act I, 13*).

Ezekiel comments on the concept of modernity. He has no soft corner for men and women who take undue advantage in the name of “freedom” “adventure” and “experience”, and he says “liberty is not license”. It is an attack on the concept of modernity. This play is also a sarcasm on the modern executives who indulge in the artificialities of the urban life style, but cannot involve themselves in the world around. They lack a sense of commitment. They will have to commit themselves to something more than their comforts and pleasures.
Bharat’s frequent references to himself as an intellectual are a satire on his false notions about himself. As a modern man he lives in an illusion. Bharat lives in a make shift world. He does not want to listen to the voices of conscience that trouble him all the time. Karnani comments,

"............In his satire of current fashion, in his exposure of pose and pretence, he comes very close to the spirit of some English social satirists in the theatre. Like them, he gives elaborate stage directions, visualizing his play as a thing not meant to be read but to be seen. This gives a certain totality of effect which cannot be imagined in cold print. (Karnani, 1974, 126)."

Ezekiel has made his sarcasm more poignant by contrasting Bharat, the executive, with Nalini, the genuine artist. At the end of the play Ezekiel shows the mirror to the modern man. He uses satire as a weapon to display the realistic picture of contemporary India. He sharpens his language to be satirically effective, employing various modes that often remind us of various masters of satire ranging from Ben Jonson to Jonathan Swift, Pope Dickens and Huxley.

Another theme which occurs in the play is of disillusionment. All the characters are shown leading a futile and meaningless life. Bharat and Raj are presented as those who have no motive, no real inner worth. They are hollow from within from the beginning till the end. Ezekiel focuses on their disorganized life style. The hollowness arises due to their unauthentic existence. He says,

"Bharat: ............I can’t create anything. I can’t build anything. I can mix only with people like myself, who dress like me...... (Nalini, Act I, 12)."
There is no motive in Bharat’s life. He feels alienated he cannot associate himself with anything substantial. Bharat has no real knowledge about the art of painting.

*Bharat:* ............whatever a man does for ten years, he continues doing for another ten............. *(Nalini, ActI, 12)*.

This unauthentic existence creates a vacuum in his life and Bharat is aware of his own weaknesses.

*Bharat:* ............what do we matter in the India that is being shaped around us? Who cares for us and our ideas? What have I to offer to anyone, except a drink? Let’s not talk of conscience............. *(Nalini, ActI, 15)*.

Bharat and Raj have their selfish motives behind helping Nalini for her exhibition. They keep on pretending all the time but in the end they prove to be worthless characters.

This depicts the aimless life of Bharat and Raj and through them, the life of contemporary urban modern man. In the end they both are sitting still and wait for Nalini to come back to them. The play ends with their longing to meet Nalini who never returns.

*Raj:* Let the bell ring  
*Bharat:* Let the bell ring  
*Raj:* It’s meaningless  
*Bharat:* It’s absurd  
*Raj:* It’s pointless *(Nalini, ActIII, 51)*.

Hence, there is this disorientation which overshadowed their life.
The play exposes the emptiness of the worldly Bharat representative of a lost generation of sophisticated Indians bewilderment by a lack of identity and their social and spiritual aimlessness. (Iyer, 2007, 67).

The theme of identity crisis is dealt at length by Nissim Ezekiel in this particular play. The characters seem to struggle hard to overcome the emptiness caused by the notion of identity conflict. They are unable to identify themselves with India and Indian value system. Bharat, Raj and Nalini have to cope with identity crisis throughout their lives.

Moutushi Chakravartee holds the view,

"The problem of identity is one of the fixed notion of one’s being and the continual process of change, of becoming. The emphasis that Ezekiel puts in Nalini on the problem of identity is ineluctably linked with man’s notion of flux and statics." (Sharma, 1995, 90).

Ezekiel makes his character think like him and they become his mouthpiece. Ezekiel’s own identity is Jewish as well as Indian. One of the reasons behind the disillusionment of the characters is their inauthentic existence. Bharat himself doesn’t know whether he is an Indian or not. The post colonial theory of Fanon can be employed in this context,

"The first step towards a post colonial perspective is to reclaim one’s over past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued." (Barry, 2007, 192).

Bharat, Raj and Nalini all are bound by the past. Bharat says,

Bharat: .....We are Indian by accident of birth, we are........

(Nalini, Act I, 17).
Due to the effect of colonization Bharat longs for his real identity. In the
voice of Bharat we find the past colonial disorientation.

...........I’m not an intellectual. I’m not an artist. I have no caste,
no community, no nationality, no culture, no
morality............you can’t wipe me out. you cancel me out.
(Nalini, Act II, 38).

Bharat, throughout the play, searches for his identity and the real self.
Like Bharat, Raj and Nalini also suffer the same pangs of unauthentic
existence. Arvind Kumar Mehrotra says,

.............Nalini concerns itself with precisely that class of
westernized Indians who were than beginning to express their
guilt about being without roots. Both the plays protagonists
belong to this class............. (Mehrotra, 2003, 344).

Ezekiel, as a modern dramatist, clearly brings out the theme of identity
crisis which is one of the problems faced by the modern urban man. It is
an issue which is taken up by many modern writers such as Girish Karnad,
and Vijay Tendulkar. In his plays Hayavadana and Nagamandala, Karnad
clearly depicts the problem of identity crisis.

Ezekiel is a modern playwright who attempts to bring the realistic picture
of contemporary urban life in Nalini by portraying the two advertising
executives, Bharat and Raj, and a young painter, Nalini. Realism presents
life as it really is Ezekiel shows an acute sensitiveness to his surroundings
which is reflected in his works and his real life experiences. These
observations have profitably been employed in Nalini. To get the whole
idea, it is apt to quote that,
Focusing on contemporary life these plays are more or less realistic in presentational styles their action is invented not derived from preexisting narratives; their settings are urban (often metropolitan) or Semi urban; and their primary level of significance is literal rather than analogical or allegorical. (Dharwadkar, 2006, 168).

Ezekiel seems to follow this modern trend in Nalini. Ezekiel makes everything appear real and as near to life of a common man. The setting of the play is the city and the action takes place in the drawing-room; even the props are realistic. This signifies the present and the immediate reality. Ezekiel intentionally makes them an advertising executive, art critic and painter to bring them nearer to the life of a common man.

Ezekiel, through Bharat, Raj and Nalini displays the real face of the people and their profession. Bharat and Raj discuss,

Bharat: ...........Art the paintings any good? (Nalini, Act I,11).

Raj Further says,

Raj: ...........who are we to criticize anyway? What do we understand about painting? (Nalini,Act I,13).

As Fritz Blackwell comments,

...........yet each of the four plays is an effective expose of reality, of the hollowness where people contrive for themselves....... (Blackwell, 1976, 267).

Ezekiel also presents the authentic countenance of the man who wants to take an advantage of Nalini and the exhibition is only a medium for Bharat and Raj to come closer to Nalini. At the same time it is depicted that the modern man is intolerant of domination by woman. Ezekiel also focuses
on the modern urban woman through the character of Nalini and presents the real condition of the women in modern India.

**Nalini:** No, you can’t. You have a formula; you can’t imagine an individual woman. You can’t believe that a woman may want to create a world of her own just as a creative man does........ *(Nalini, ActII, 38).*

Ezekiel also depicts the reality of the colonial consequence on the lifestyle and mindset of modern urban men due to the long colonization effect. Bharat and Raj suffer from identity crisis. Their talk reveals their present state of alienation,

**Bharat:** ......We are modern only as it suits us, but we don’t fight for the modern against the dying and the dead.
we are liberal only as it suits us, but we don’t fight for the liberal against the orthodox and the tyrannical..............we are Indian by accident of birth, we are........ *(Nalini, ActII, 17).*

Reality of the concept of modernity is also presented by the Ezekiel. There is no real inner worth in Bharat and Raj. Ezekiel attacks the concept of modernity by portraying the character of Bharat, Raj and Nalini in the modern setting.

**Bharat:** I am not upset we are in capable of being upset........
when we look into the mirror we see shining examples of the successful modern young executive...... *(Nalini, ActIII, 46).*

Through the realistic presentation of modern Indian life Ezekiel draws our attention towards modernism and its impact on the common man. *Nalini* represents life and the social world as it appears to the common reader,
evoking the belief that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might as well happen. In this context it may be quoted:

\[\text{...........Realism is the indispensable modern mode for understanding coping with, and representing the post-independence present. (Dharwadkar,2006,271).}\]

One of the themes in *Nalini* is post-colonial consciousness. The point of view of the whole text is post colonial in tone and impact. The post colonial consciousness can be felt throughout the play. The characters in the play are unable to associate themselves with their ‘Indian-ness’. They face the aftermath of the crisis of colonization. This identity crisis among the characters is one of the main reasons which can be directly associated with post-colonialism. The effect of colonialism can be traced in the characters, through their actions, thoughts and dialogues.

*Nalini* is a fine example of a post colonial text. The characters are fighting a battle to earn their identity, as a sense of rootlessness overshadows their presence. Bharat wants back his own past, he tries to get back to his roots. Due to the effect of colonial experience, Bharat and Raj long for their identity whether they belong to India or not. They want to establish their own identity. Bharat again and again in *Nalini* destroys the colonialisit ideology. Hence, Fanon’s theory is fully applicable to the play *Nalini*:

\[\text{...........First step for colonialised people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past. For centuries the European colonizing power will have devalued the nation’s past........... (Barry,2007,192).}\]
Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives

All the characters in *Nalini* are connected with India but they are unable to identify their real identity.

Edward Said’s theory can also be applied to *Nalini*. After getting praise from an American Nalini decides to hold an exhibition for her paintings, which shows that the Indians highly esteem the views of the American.

**Raj:** An American she met the other day liked the paintings. He suggested an Exhibition. *(Nalini, Act 1, 10).*

According to Edward Said,

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............which is a specific expose of the Eurocentric universalism which takes for granted both the superiority of what is European or western, and the inferiority of what is not said identifies a European cultural tradition of ‘orientalism’ which is a particular and long standing way of identifying. The East as ‘other’ and inferior to the west............ (Barry, 2007,192).
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According to Edward Said, the West is regarded as superior and in this way the East becomes the ‘other’, and inferior to the West. Due to colonization the feeling of inferiority arises in the Indian psyche. Bharat says:

**Bharat:**.............I can’t create anything I can’t build anything. I can mix only with people like myself, who dress like me.......... *(Nalini, Act 1, 12).*

Ezekiel, through his characters, brings forth his own ideas and experiences. As he is a modern playwright he wants to bring the whole essence and experience of the Indians after the period of colonization. Due to the colonial effects Bharat who is a modern young executive, finds himself isolated and alienated and rootless.
The characters in *Nalini* lead a dual life. They have two selves, the inner self and the outer life. This concept of dual personality arises due to the effect of colonization, which creates in them identity crisis and existential problem. The emphasis on identity as doubled or hybrid or unstable is one of the characteristics of post colonial theory. One of the chief issues in *Nalini* is the problem of lack of identity and social mechanism evolved over centuries in traditional Indian society to suppress women and her independence as a human being.

In *Nalini*, Ezekiel wants to explore the condition of women in modern urban India. Ezekiel, throughout the play, reveals the condition and the psyche of women. By naming the play ‘*Nalini*’, also the central character, Ezekiel focuses on the importance of women in society. Ezekiel portrays two young executives as the inauthentic men, and puts more emphasis on the character of Nalini who is presented as stronger and more substantial. Through the character of Nalini Ezekiel presents the new woman who is independent and has her own independent views. She is an artist in the real sense of the word.

\[
\text{Nalini:} \quad \text{........Every time I created a painting, I created myself.........} \quad (Nalini, Act II, 40).
\]

\[
\text{Bharat:} \quad \text{.......I can’t understand art but I can understand artist.........} \quad (Nalini, Act II, 30).
\]

Ezekiel focuses on how women are treated by men in the Indian society. Man wants to take undue advantage of women. He considers women to be of inferior race. Here Ezekiel deals with the psyche of man. According to Aristotle,
Women for Aristotle are inferior to men due to an inherent lack in the female biology. St Thomas further added that women are the cause of sin and hence should occupy subordinate position in society (Mazumdar, 2005, 6).

Bharat: The less women talk, the less nonsense they talk (Nalini, Act I, 13).

Nalini is not ready to surrender to the empty Bharat and Raj.

Nalini: I don’t want to be dependent on my parents, very much longer (Nalini, Act II, 30).

Ezekiel brings the idea of Indian feminism through Nalini.

Nalini: No you can’t you have a formula; you can’t imagine an individual woman. You can’t believe that a woman may want to create a world of her own just as a creative man does, a woman with the will to explore herself and the world around her (Nalini, Act II, 38).

Nalini has her own independent views and ideas. Ezekiel shows the feminist perspective and displays the self realization of Nalini. She says,

Nalini: it is freedom, which includes the freedom to create something new...... I want to be on the side of change, the unpredictable exploration, discovery, invention...... (Nalini, Act II, 43).

Nalini rejects the help of advertising executives and shows them their real face. Bharat himself realizes in the end and becomes frustrated as he says,

Bharat: The second Nalini is serious, damn her she’s probably a good painter, damn her, she has ideas damn her you can’t fool her she provokes, she challenges, she questions, she contradicts........she’s
an independent woman, with the intelligence of a man and the determination of an orthodox Indian mother-in-law. She’s a living insult to me and to you to all of us Damn her............ (Nalini,ActIII,45).

One theme in *Nalini* is the predicament of the modern Indian, grappling with his unique history, split between the tendency to affiliate with Indian cultural traditions and its attraction to western values. Another is the Indian sensibility which runs throughout the play. The essence of the play is Indian values. Even the characters’ names are reflective of Indian ethos. The setting of the play is the drawing room of a metropolitan city. Realism and fantasy are in congruous mixture in the play. Fantasy is one common quality which is found in Indian works. Fantasy may be defined as the absurd, the eccentric, and the improbable, as something which is hardly possible in real life. It is as if the playwright gives free reign to his imagination. Ezekiel merges the two devices effectively in *Nalini*. He presents realistic persons and situations. Characters are portrayed realistically against a middle class background. The dialogues are also typical of every day Indian life.

Ezekiel achieves greatness in the field of characterization by recognizing his range and working within it. He himself belonged to a middle class family. He was intimately familiar with its ways, habits and aspirations. His preoccupation is with the middle class, a relatively small part of an agricultural civilization and the most conscious and anxious part of the population.

Ezekiel possesses the ability to create living, concrete characters. The characters in the play are sharply and distinctly individualized. Characters
have been endowed with life and vitality, and linger long in the memory. Close, firsthand knowledge of the life and characters of the urban population his portrayal in *Nalini* presents a veritable picture gallery with living breathing human beings.

Ezekiel’s characters are both types and individuals. They belong to some particular type or class but they are also possessing individual qualities. Characters are not mere symbols or types. They are living, breathing realities, with an individuality of their own characters are sharply and distinctly individualized. Characters become lively through his direct description and through their interaction with the other characters and through masterly dialogue. All characters, whether major or minor, male or female have their assigned roles. They represent the hybridization of the western and the Indian culture.

The focus of this section is to represent Ezekiel’s art of characterization in *Nalini*, and also elaborate his deliberate formulation of the blend of tradition and modernity in the play *Nalini*. Bharat and Raj are displayed as modern advertising executives and the characters of Bharat and Raj represent corporate mentality. Another character is a young painter Nalini who is the central figure in the play. Through her character Ezekiel brings forward the feminist perspective and exposes the futility of modern advertising executives. Ezekiel reveals to us the reality of the profession of advertising executive and an art critic and through the character defines their real motive. All the characters belong to middle class urban Indian life. All are well educated modern and placed deliberately by the playwright in a metropolitan city just to focus on the superficial life of the urban man. All the characters represent some class
and become the examples through which one can predict and analyze the whole class and their existing psyche. Characters are conscious about their values and are unable to ignore their traditional past and their traditional values.

............Nalini, sub titled A comedy in three Acts, have the characters admit at the end of the play that they are, indeed, in a play.........The two male characters are trying to decide which Nalini..........the girl of their sexual fantasies, a object, or the actual person, who refuses to be objectified..........is real........ (Blackwell,1976,266).

Ezekiel comments about his characters to P. Bayapa Reddy,

Ezekiel: Yes, I feel my characters are living, but I don’t like to make claims for my work. It is for the critics to decide. (Sharma,1995,30).

Ezekiel employs the principle of parallelism and contrast in developing his characters. His favourite device of characterization is juxtaposition. He places the intellectual by the side of the ignorant.

In Ezekiel’s characterization we find contrasting pairs, Bharat and Nalini are a contrast to each other, and at the same time parallel like Bharat and Raj Another trait which is employed by Ezekiel is double personality, split personality or dual personality. Bharat finds himself divided in to two beings; he has an inner life and an outer. He is struggling with his own self for his identity. Likewise, Nalini has also been shown as divided into two selves. This concept of disillusionment and psychological disorientation is one of the traits that can be associated with Modern drama.
Ezekiel’s characters in *Nalini* are real and living. They speak a language which is real and close to life and experience. Ezekiel evolved his own personal experience to give life to his characters and make them lively. As Ezekiel says:

**Ezekiel:** ........I felt that the characters would basically speak like that in real life.  
(Patel, www.mumbaitheatreguide.com)

All the characters seem to express Ezekiel’s views to us. Ezekiel makes his characters familiar to us due to his own keen observation of life and his own experience. In one of his interview he says:

**Ezekiel:** .......But that is the point of the playwright’s interest. If the playwright’s interests are limited and he really does not know anything about that world........if I had created an advertising executive or if I had created an art critic and knew nothing about them,......then Putting them into a play would be a hopeless proposition.....  
(Patel, www.mumbaitheatreguide.com)

Ezekiel’s characters are modern urban, educated men and women. Through his characters Ezekiel represents the crisis faced by Indians after colonization. The long lasting impact of colonization on the Indian psyche and mindset is displayed. By making Nalini a central character Ezekiel brings forward women who are modern, progressive and independent. She is not ready to surrender herself before men.
As Ezekiel said, if you mean that women are the dominant characters in my plays, I don’t agree. But they are certainly as important as the men characters. (Sharma, 1995, P30).

At the level of characterization Nalini is a blend of tradition and modernity. All characters are contemporary as well as traditional and show many features which are closely associated with traditionality. In the conventional drama the hero becomes the spokesperson to represent the ideas of the playwrights. In Nalini, another characteristic is the reformist attitude of the author who wants to discover and find out something new. This urge to find out something new and evolve from the old psychology is one of the elements of traditional drama. All the characters are bound by past experiences. They are unable to identify their real identity. It is a modern play as the settings are of urban city, exhibitions, art galleries, drawing rooms etc. And all the characters are shown to be modern in appearance, in outlook and ideas and in profession.

All the characters in Nalini are different in temperament. Bharat is suffering from superiority complex. In his character we find pretentiousness and affectations. He is empty from within. He does not understand the art of painting, yet he has become an art critic because he has no other option except this profession. As he himself says,

Bharat: ..........There’s prestige in art, intellectual respectability and all that. It’s the same with the theatre, dance, music, all the arts.

Bharat: I got into art by accident..........Now I’ve been in it for ten years. And I like being in it, I honestly do, it’s fun. (Nalini, Act II, 33).
Bharat is living in an illusion—he doesn’t want to listen to the voice of conscience and ignores those voices which trouble him. He is a modern man living in a make shift world. He is a snob who thinks he should act first and then think. The character of Bharat is unauthentic. Between art and artist he better understands artist as he doesn’t have real knowledge of art. But Nalini knows his reality when he compares her painting with Picasso and she refuses to take help from him. Bharat is vivacious and loquacious too. In *Nalini*, Ezekiel exposes these characters and the world around them.

On the other hand the character of Raj, who has interest in the exhibition of Nalini’s paintings, but in reality he has no real knowledge about it. He has his own hidden motive behind helping Nalini for exhibition.

...............Characters are types. Bharat is boastful; Raj is “The silent, suffering sort”. Ezekiel employs a retrospective narrative to portray his character. Nalini has “a double personality of the artist half women, half omniscience with the eyes of God, and thus isolated from humanity. (Dwivedi,1999,119).

In *Nalini* we find inner conflict in the characters, which is an element of Ezekiel’s plays. In *Nalini* we find real conflict in the characters of Bharat and Nalini who are distorted beings with fractured selves; both attempt to experience existence. There is a self contradiction in the character of Bharat. He himself knows his own weakness. Bharat accepts the job of publicity but doesn’t have any real knowledge about the art of painting. As he confesses,

Bharat: ............O I’ll be remorseful alright. I won’t congratulate myself on cheating the public, for telling
Satyadev Dubey, comments on the characters:

............In all four plays the characters are distinctly and purposely types, for it is the situation that is central and dominant. There is no Psychological development; these are not plays for individual character analyses........ (Blackwell, 1976,268).

Their conversation reveals their different views and opposite ideas. In the beginning their conversation is informal but as it precede it changes into a serious conversation. Nalini is a serious character with profound sense of existence while Bharat and Raj are hollow ego centric. Moutushi Chakravartee writes,

..............Nalini’s seriousness presents a contrast to the attitude of Raj and Bharat................. (Sharma,1995,90).

Bharat and Raj are friends both have a particular image of women and they have the same anticipation about Nalini but they both fail to know and assess the real character of Nalini.

Ezekiel also presents a contrast between the ‘real Nalini’ and the ‘dream Nalini’. The dream Nalini of Bharat is bold in her action; she agrees to do whatever Bharat expects from her; on the other hand the real Nalini is a woman who has her own ideas. She is an independent woman. She disappoints Bharat by refusing his indecent advances. Hence, Ezekiel presents a contrast between the dream-Nalini and real Nalini. Ezekiel also presents a contrast between illusion and reality.
Ezekiel made sarcasm by contrasting Bharat, the executive with Nalini, the genuine artist. (Pandey, 1990, 106).

Ezekiel has given a contrast between life and art also. Modern man is trapped, and can only pursue thought but have no will to act. Life has become stagnant whereas art explores, discovers, invents. Life is dull even when we change; it is not in the real sense. On the contrary art has a future for all.

One of the main characters in Nalini is Bharat who is an advertising executive. He is an urban Indian man living in a metropolitan city. Bharat’s character is a planned portrayal of dual personality and its instinctive limitations belong to the growing frustration of the youth of the modern age. Bharat is a mute observer of the conflict between tradition and modernity Indians are encountering in this transitional phase history. It is apt to remark here,

Bharat’s character is drawn in the round, he is vivacious and loquacious too. (Rubin, 1998, 523).

Ezekiel presents the inauthentic world of an advertising executive through the character of Bharat and Raj. Bharat can be compared with Naipaul’s hero in the A house for Mr. Biswas (1961), who is eager to create himself as a new and individual person, away from the traditional values of a decayed Hindu social order. Bharat who is living in a metropolitan city, has a busy life but in actuality he is isolated and leading an alienated life. In the opening scene of the play he is shown sitting still when Raj enters and inquires:

Raj: What are you doing, apart from listening to music?
Bharat: I am sitting still.
Raj: What are you doing, apart from sitting still?
Bharat: Pascal says that the sum of evil in the world would be much diminished if men could only learn to sit quietly in their rooms.......... I am busy diminishing the sum of evil in the world.......... (Nalini,Act1,9).

Through his characters Ezekiel attempts to pinpoint the real facets of the advertising world where they hold less knowledge or authority by ensuring more to Nalini. They basically wish to feed on her ignorance in the field of marketing as she is a creative and zealous artist. As Raj said,

Raj: .......... They are paintings, canvases with colour on them, plenty of colours in various forms...... (Nalini,Act1,11).

Bharat, who is presented as a busy active man but from within hollow, feels himself to be isolated from others, due to this alienation he finds himself to be divided into two; one his inner self and the other his outer self one, his inner life the another, his public life.

Bharat: I don’t think you live only one life. I think you live at least two lives, the public life and the inner life. (Nalini,Act1,18).

In Bharat’s character one can easily predict the contradiction. In this reference it can be quoted,

There is a sort of dichotomy, a self contraction in Bharat’s personality......... (Sharma,1995,89).

In the character of Bharat there is an inner conflict. He is unable to connect himself to India. He longs for his real identity; all this is due to the impact of the colonization. Here, Ezekiel focuses on the psyche or mindset which developed after the colonization due to the long colonial experience. The Indian man is unable to search his real identity.
Bharat: ..........But what are we? Liberal, modern, advanced, progressive Indians? Are we Indians? And if we are not Indians, what are we? (Nalini, Act I, 16).

Through the character of Bharat, Ezekiel comments on the concept of modernity. Modern men have modern attitudes and ideas but in reality they are empty from within and have hollow ideas. Here Ezekiel comments on everything which is associated with modernity. As Bharat says:

Bharat: ............ We are modern only as it suits us, but we don’t fight for the modern against the dying, and the dead. We are liberal only as it suits us,........We are Indian by accident of birth, we are... (Nalini, Act I, 17).

Ezekiel intentionally places Bharat in Nalini. He seems to speak through the character of Bharat. Bharat lives in a dream world. He frames all the women in one canon. He wants to take advantage of Nalini. As Bharat says:

Bharat: Men are never saints with women. (Nalini, Act I, P10).

Bharat’s character focuses on the different issues of modern times and on existing problems. Through his character Ezekiel focuses on the problems of alienation and isolation which is a current problem faced by the modern man. Ezekiel presents sharp social satire and comments on different aspects of the life of contemporary man. Fritz Blackwell commented on the characters in Nalini:

........The hollowness inherent in the plays and the playwright’s careful manipulation of the characters as types so that the situation dominates are reinforced by and allow for a third characteristic an expose of not merely a
mindlessness but an anti-thought outlook characteristic.......... (Blackwell,1976,269).

Bharat and Raj both pretend to be intellectuals but in reality they are not. Raj appears to be a little less manipulative and ambitious than Bharat. His will less orientation into the adoption of a life that he fails to apprehend is noteworthy in the scheme of the play.

Bharat and Raj evolve in the course of the play as insightful and sensitive characters that learn to live without happiness, inconsequential characters find destinies and designs. Raj’s character focuses on emptiness of contemporary man and the effect of colonization on the mindset of the urban man. Through Raj, Ezekiel satirizes the Indian man who goes abroad and comes back with a sense of rootlessness.

Raj: you could go abroad and come back. They make better use of you when you go abroad and come back. At least they pay your better. You need not learn anything abroad. Just go and come back.......... (Nalini,ActI,13).

It is apt to comment regarding the same:

..........Ezekiel shows that no man is a compartment unto himself; he is a mixture of good and evil, and that he tries to justify himself to the external world but inwardly nobody knows better than he himself his own weakens......... (Sharma,1995,85).

Nalini is a young painter and is the central character with an independent vision to portray the condition of Indian women in urban Indian cities.

..........Nalini asserts her individuality, independence and ability to break convention tradition and outdated formula and create the world a fresh.......... (Iyer,2007,71).
Through her Ezekiel satirizes artists who are not confident about their work or want to take help of the commercial world for publicity. In the play we find that according to Indian psyche, characters regarded whites as superior to themselves, so after getting appreciation from an American, Nalini decide to hold an exhibition of her painting.

Raj: ........An American she met the other day liked the paintings. He suggested an exhibition. (Nalini, Act I, 10).

Nalini's vitalistic apprehension of reality and her approach to existence as an active, experimental entity distinguishes her from both the stereotype traditional Indian female character and the apparently emancipated character in the post-colonial social periphery. Nalini emerges as a peculiar combination of a believer in traditional morality and experimental, modern woman with selective concepts of virginity. She confesses that she is not a virgin but just to get, 'work done' she chooses not to surrender or bargain her maidenhood. She confirms any such act as amoral or immoral. Any passionate involvement that leads to sensual intimacy or closeness is acceptable to her within moral codes of values in a modern society. This is the complete 'womanhood' that celebrates in Nalini, an emancipated woman with socially sanctioned norms of institutional religious behaviour. She says to Bharat,

Bharat: You are not a virgin.
Nalini: Did you want me to be?
Nalini: No.
Nalini: Well, then, at last you're not disappointed. (Nalini, Act II, 37).

The dream Nalini of Bharat is,
Slender and sweet, tall, fair, completely mod, in style, her hair done up in a bee-hive, her choli short, low-cut and backless. (Nalini, Act II, 25).

The Nalini of Bharat’s fantasy favours him. She fulfils all dreams of Bharat. But the real Nalini is totally different. She is an independent woman and a confident and promising young artist. She is not ready to surrender to the immoral advances of Bharat and Raj. Nalini presents a contrast to Bharat and Raj. She rejects Bharat’s offer and peels of his mask and shows him his real face. She says to Bharat,

Nalini: Prude? For not surrendering to your empty charm, your hollow ideas, for not admiring yourself indulgent description of how you live!... (Nalini, Act II, 36).

The real Nalini is different in appearance from the Nalini of Bharat’s fantasy.

...........she is soberly dressed though with a strong hint of sensuality in her person. She is shorter and less slender........... (Nalini, Act II, 30).

Through the character of Nalini, Ezekiel displays the condition of a woman artist and the psyche of men for women. Nalini is a fine example of a woman who has her own ideas and views. She is confident, and has values within her and does not follow the set ways, expectations of men. She has courage to stand against men like Bharat and Raj. She finds herself to be divided into two.

Nalini: I had experienced myself divided into two persons. (Nalini, Act II, 41).

Nalini: .......I looked at this other person with my eyes and she looked back at me with the eyes of God. I realized that
she suffered from some unimaginable upheaval within her. She was alone separated from humanity......... *(Nalini, Act II, 41).*

Nalini’s creative urge is expressed when she admits:

**Nalini:** It is freedom, which includes the freedom to create something new......... *(Nalini, Act II, 42).*

Nalini comments on the nature of existence and men:

**Nalini:** Real to me! How can you be till you’re real to yourself? *(Nalini, Act II, 37).*

Real Nalini is revealed to male protagonists and in utter bewilderment Bharat says:

**Bharat:** The first Nalini I dreamt about, a day dream in which she was what I expected her to be.

**Bharat:** ........The second Nalini is serious, damn her........She’s an independent woman, with the intelligence of a man and the determination of an orthodox Indian mother in law. She’s a living insult to me and to you, to all of us. Damn her. *(Nalini, Act III, 45).*

This section deals with the different theatrical devices employed in *Nalini.* The play was able to captivate the audience who sat mesmerized through the entire duration of the play. The plot of the play is simple and has a tightly-knit structure; it is symmetrical as it has three acts and three major characters. The plot and character are therefore interdependent critical concepts. Actions performed by particular characters become the plot of the play. Most of the action of the play takes place within a drawing room of the metropolitan city. The play has a well-knit structure with a good beginning, middle and an ending all the three characters Bharat, Raj and
Nalini are well differentiated to meet the needs of the plot. The play moves from reality to fantasy and again to reality. It can be said in this context.

**Ezekiel’s plays are fine examples in symmetric construction. He treats hackneyed themes in Ezekielian manner. Irony, parallelism, wit and human abound in his plays. His plays reveal his sharp observation of the oddities in human life and behaviour...........** (Dwivedi,1999,122).

The play has achieved a great success because it has a proper beginning, middle and an end. The story is based on Nalini who is the central character, and her encounter with the young advertising executives. The play ends in the Act III, after Nalini’s departure both wait for Nalini but she never comes back. Thus plot moves in a circular motion. Nalini has been only a framework or window to peep through and get a glimpse of the Universal experience. In an interview Ezekiel himself gives his views about the technique of the play.

**Ezekiel: No I would say that I took a kind of straight forward comparatively simple attitude towards the writing of the plays and there is nothing by the way of the experimental or the absolutely original or anything like that, it is just about coping with their main concepts, and the main characters and their problems and relationships plus whatever are been introduced by way of humour and seriousness.......** (Anklesaria,2008,33).

It has a unity of place, time and action and there is a blend of story, incident, situation and characters. In *Nalini* we find all the elements of theatricality interwoven with compact structure to define traditional theatre.
The setting of *Nalini* is an attractive room of Bharat. Ezekiel attempts to make, his play purely naturalistic by placing all the characters in a metropolitan city; the entire incident take place within the drawing room of Bharat. Ezekiel maintains a unity of place in the play. “Spoken words” are very important in theatre, so are visuals and continuous change in visuals through movements, body language, and through unobtrusive prop change. All such stage effects make the play appear more meaningful to the theatre audience. Ezekiel puts forward the real Indian condition and places the play in the drawing room. The setting makes it appear real and it helps in bringing the reality of India i.e. the ordinary reality. Drawing room becomes the central space which is connected with the other lived and ordinary spaces. The play Nalini is located in a certain urban and Indian milieu.

**SCENE:** an attractive, small room, with books and colourful paintings, one of them a large abstraction, the other modern and more or less obscure. The furniture is contemporary and in excellent taste....... *(Nalini,Act1,9).*

The shifting of the things suggests the change in the mood of the characters Ezekiel attempts to show the urban Indian culture by placing the modern gadget and a furniture which is a mixture both old and new realistic props signify the present and the immediate reality. It is mingling of the past with present, fantasy with reality. Even through the props display a heightened awareness and modern sensitivity or the stage and its potential. As commented by Tabish Khair in this context. He said:
Ezekiel explores a particular kind of drawing room culture, its fantasies, its hopes, its lies and its limitations. (Anklesaria, 2008, 546).

The use of dream techniques and sequences is a feature of modern drama. In the Act II there are minute changes in the setting ‘a large vase of flowers’ is arranged with a perfect lightening which makes dream scene possible on the stage. The well appointed and tasteful room in which all the action of the play takes place indicates the world inhabited by the Bharat and Raj. In Nalini, a particular type of drawing room is shown in metropolitan, Mumbai. Further, in the Act III, ‘bowl of flowers’ is seen and the ‘large abstract painting’ is replaced by a more conventional landscape. The action of the play takes place at one place i.e. the drawing room, the advertising creative space of young male executive. In the end, the setting shows the gloomy mindsets of Bharat and Raj and the crisis faced by them.

The play proves itself to be theatrically vital. The playwright employs certain audio visual device..........the sense setting, the voice, the music and the ring of the bell add to the theatrical effect of the play...............(Reddy,1990,31).

The dialogue or language used in the Nalini is effective and lively. The essence of the play is Indian but the language used by Ezekiel is English. The play appears to be modern because of the language of the play. The dialogues are sharp and witty. Ezekiel speaks from the side of the characters and the language used by the characters in Nalini is common and natural.

With clear stage device resembling the multiple settings of darkness, music, fantasy........Nalini is subtle
Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives

teatre and a good deal depends on the witty and sharp
dialogue........... (Rubin,1998,524).

Ezekiel employs very appropriate dialogue and sometimes the dialogue creates a sense of nothingness. The language is light, easy, racy and sparkling, at other moment, it becomes dense and gains conversational quality. Ezekiel is capable of turning words into a metaphor, image or symbols as the situation demands. As Anisur Rehman commented about Ezekiel’s language:

....................There is actually nothing like Indian English. What the artist has to do to explore his identify first and foremost as an Indian writing in English. He has to show adequate command over it so that it does not appear to be alien. Ezekiel is aware of this problem and has largely succeeded in his use of the English medium. (Sharma,1995,266).

Breakdown of communication is meaningful communication in drama. The playwrights often make use of the pauses or silences which are proved to be dramatic or even better than the spoken words in modern drama. Playwright creates before us the lively situation and realistic characters with the help of dialogues. Here the dialogues are light and sparkling Ezekiel employs language which suits to the lifestyles of the characters. But when in reality Bharat actually meets the real Nalini he feels disappointed as she is quite different from his dream Nalini. She is a genuine artist, an independent woman who has her own will. She exposes the sham of Bharat and Raj with real Nalini.

Ezekiel uses appropriate dialogues at particular situation and on the appropriate characters. Through his dialogues he focuses on various aspects and presents more realistic picture of the society. The dialogues
are sharp and witty and his viewpoint is conveyed very effectively as well as convincingly to the audience through the language. Many experimental theatrical devices are used by the playwright in the play. Some deserve special mention; one of them is voice which represents hum and buzz of city life. The voices are sometime pessimistic and sometime optimistic. In the Act-I, the “Voices” attract the attention and control the mind of the audience. As the voices say,

**VOICES:** Don’t you think you’re being too optimistic….. pessimistic........ idealistic......... *(Nalini,Act-I,20).*

These voices are the voices of the conscience of Bharat and Raj. It is one of the traditional elements which are employed by Ezekiel in *Nalini.*

The next positive aspect which comes to mind is the music, as it creates the mood in the play. The music meanders or rises to a crescendo as the situation demanded. The music has a path of its own which is followed assiduously and at the same time complemented and blended with the requirements of the script and acting in *Nalini.* Music becomes soft and sometimes rises which gives the idea about the mood of the characters. There is variation in the music which changes from soft to jazz and at the end no music is heard. Dependence on music is the characteristic of the modern theatre. In the Act-I Bharat can be seen listening ‘soft quiet classical music’ the whole auditorium is crammed up with music it lowers and rises to intensify the effect of the play. The music becomes dim between the dialogue and the gap is filled by the melody. In the Act-II jazz is heard and music goes up and down. It has a snob value and thus clarifies the mood of the characters. At the end, in Act-III, no music is heard by the audience but later Bharat switch on the gramophone which
proves that Bharat and Raj come back to their own world of make believe. Music is allowed without intruding, but complementing and supplementing the content and intent of the play. The implication of music in *Nalini* displays Ezekiel’s ability to combine the traditional as well as modern element which made the play. Theatrically vital, Bell which is one the modern urban gadget is another device which is effectively used by Ezekiel in *Nalini*. Every scene starts with the ringing of the bell. Characters enter on the stage as the bell rings, as it is associated with entry of the characters on the stage. Real Nalini enters with a “Knock” at the door. In the Act-III, the bell rings but Nalini never comes back,

Bharat: Let the bell ring.
Raj: They've forgotten to ring the bell.
Bharat: Bell please. Someone ring the bell, please. *(Nalini, Act III, 51).*

Again in the end they said,

Raj: And don’t ring that blasted bell again. *(Nalini, Act III, 55).*

Bharat and Raj wished to hear a sound of bell but bell rings in a different way from their wish.

Raj: you ask for the bell to be rung and you get your head knocked off. *(Nalini, Act III, 52).*

Raj: .................when a bell rings that loudly, things are out of control.
Raj: .................Insist on that bell being rung properly, sedately, decorously..... *(Nalini, Act III, 53).*

In the end, the bell become a “shattering roar” and seems to be out of the control of human being. As Raj said,
Raj: *it depends on what you mean by naturally..............This bell was unnatural, unexpected. It was shocking....* (*Nalini*, ActIII, 54).

The hollowness and futility of Bharat and Raj can be traced through the gentle ring in the Act-I and the blasting at the end of the play.

Ezekiel employs the light as a theatrical device to enhance the impact of the play and to make it more appealing to the theatre viewers. In the Act-I proper lighting arrangement is shown, light goes on and off on the stage according to the need and requirement of the characters as presented in Act-I

"............The lighting is particularly stylish, reflecting the individuality of the owner............." (*Nalini*, ActI, 9).

In Act-II there is no light and the stage is in darkness.

.............The stage is in virtual darkness this time. There is a spot of light down centre which Bharat does not enter during the first part of the Act. His movements are in semi-darkness............. (*Nalini*, ActIII, 25).

The proper lightening arrangement enhances the impact of the play. It can be quoted in this context,

.................The function of light was not merely to describe the setting and action, but also to interpret it.........light which casts shadows is more expressive than the light which flattens the image. The function of the light was also to bring about the desired fusion of the sets, the stage floor and the actor. The stage with its expressive interplay of light and shade becomes a microcosm of the universe............. (*Zaidi*, 2005, 20).
Ezekiel uses other devices such as dream technique. He uses this to predict the real face of the hollow, young advertising executive. He presents the dream enactment of love scene in which Bharat dreams about Nalini the dream Nalini.

She is slender and sweet, tall, fair, completely mod 

(Nalini, ActII, 25).

Bharat makes love with this dream-Nalini who is totally opposite to the real Nalini. Another dream scene occurs when Nalini tells Bharat that she is herself divided into two people and she finds as if a ghost has entered in his room. She finds the artist her to be divided into two.

I was painting one afternoon when I felt a strange sensation.  
It was startling, un-canny as if a ghost had entered the room. 
(Nalini, ActII, 41).

It is this dream scene which covers Act-II and love scene is one of the traits of modernity. Ezekiel’s portrayal of the dream scene in Nalini is an implication of psychoanalytic criticism According to Freud’s theory.

Dream work, the process by which real events or desires are transformed into a dream image........ (Barry, 2007,98).

Bharat’s unfulfilled desire comes out through the dream vision where he imagines the dream Nalini to be cooperative with him. As Freud says:

........that a dream is an escape hatch or safety valve through which repressed desires, fears, or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind........ (Barry, 2007,99).
Imagery is a characteristic of the traditional form used by the Ezekiel in his play *Nalini*. As one Nalini is real, and the other imaginary Bharat says to Raj:

Raj: Two Nalinis. What do you mean?
Bharat: The first Nalini I dreamt about, a day dream in which she was what I expected her to be. (*Nalini*, Act III, P45).

So characters imagine themselves divided into two selves, one of which is their imaginary self. They make their own imaginary world where each and every thing happens according to their will but in reality, they are leading a life of futility and hypocrisies. Another imagery has been used by Ezekiel for e.g. when Raj imagines himself to be transformed into a bird:

> I used to imagine that I was a bird, and I would fly to her window-sill and sit there silently so that no one would shoo me off and I would watch her from the corner of my eyes. (*Nalini*, Act I, P22).

Here, the use of imagery is a traditional element. So, the play can be said to have a blend of tradition and modernity at different levels. Also in Act-II Bharat is compared with a hawk. Ezekiel presents the imagery of the hawk when he says:

Bharat sits up, takes her in at a glance, and rises like a hawk to meet her, He is visibly impressed by her beauty, gathers himself together to impress her,......... (*Nalini*, Act II, P25).

.........She’s an independent woman, with the intelligence of a man and the determination of an orthodox Indian mother in law......... (*Nalini*, Act III, P45).

Nalini has her own ideas about life and art. Bharat says,
I appreciate what I’ve got. Its wonderful. The new Indian women I meet, right here, in this city, are wonderful.......... (Nalini, Act I, 14).

Ezekiel presents many symbols to depict the existing situation of the contemporary Indian man and woman, advertising world and artist. His use of symbolism depicts the effect of the traditional element. All these characteristics show that the play has a tinge of traditionalism in it. It is a modern play with conventional patterns in it. Nalini is a comedy of ideas with the use of wit and irony. It is fully justified through situation, dialogue, speeches and characters. The whole situation of the play is comic, but it predicts the social realism. They also make fun of their modernity

‘We are modern only as it suits us, but we don’t fight for the modern against the dying and the dead.......... (Nalini, Act I, 16).

In this play Ezekiel also brings some of the elements of an absurdist theatre. Prof. Zahida Zaidi, in this context remarks,

Absurd drama is an attempt to come to terms with the realities of this uncomfortable existence. It confronts the audience not only with the absurdity of the unauthentic existence, shrouded in illusion and evasions, but also with the essential absurdity of human condition itself.......... (Zaidi, 2005, 178).

The characters in the play are in one or the other way same like in an absurd drama. In absurd drama characters are a pair. They are simply contrasting and binary pairs. Likewise, Bharat and Raj who think on similar lines, they both are urban Indian men and young advertising executives. Both suffer from inner conflict and insecurity. If we trace the setting of the
play in an absurd drama then there is only one place around which all the characters life revolves around. There is unity of space and time, as in Nalini. All the action revolves around Bharat’s room.

The theme of the play in an absurd theatre is nothingness, and it is fully expressed by the character of Bharat and Raj. There life is motiveless and full of boredom. They are leading a life in which they are not true to themselves, their life becomes repetitive, nothing new happens as Bharat says,

Another drink, another girl, another party, another sales conference, another exhibition, another play to be produced with all those stirring ideas in it, .......... (Nalini, Act III, 47).

We sit down quietly, and will her to come (Nalini, Act III, 52).

In absurd drama, there is this image which is called poetic image or dream image. The entire story moves around this image, and characters wait for this image convert to real as shown in Beckett’s Waiting for Godot. In Nalini, this image is represented by Nalini who never turns up.

Raj: what a pity! I would love to meet her again now.
Bharat: Let’s try again.
Raj: How do we try?
Bharat: we sit down quietly, and will her to come.
(Nalini, Act III, 52).

Both Raj and Bharat wait eagerly for Nalini and they wish that Nalini would enter their room, and wait for the bell. They again and again say the same thing.

Raj: ..........This bell was unnatural, unexpected it was shocking ...... (Nalini, Act III, 54).
Raj: And don’t ring that blasted bell again (*Nalini*, Act III, 55).

In the audience there is eagerness to know what will happen next - whether the bell will ring or whether she is going to come or not. The play ends when the bell rings.

Dialogues also show that it is a play which has some element of absurd drama; some dialogues are meaningless or pointless and some are repetitions. Bharat and Raj keep on repeating the same thing.

Raj: We’re trapped.
Bharat: Yes, we’re trapped.
Raj: But the play must go on.
Bharat: The play must go on.
Raj: So what happens?
Bharat: The bell rings.
Raj: who rings the bell?
Bharat: Nalini.
Raj: Which one.

So, the dialogues are repetitive and have no sense. Further, as conversation moves.

Raj: you are full of energy.
Bharat: you are full of enthusiasm.
Raj: you are full of beans.
Bharat: you are full of pineapple juice.
Raj: you are simple at heart.
Bharat: you are noble of mind. (*Nalini*, Act III, 50).

They are passionately waiting for the bell to ring,

Bharat: Bell please. someone ring the bell, please.
Raj: This is very frustrating.
Nalini: A Critique of Indian Traditional and Modern Perspectives

Bharat: it’s inefficient.
Raj: it’s meaningless.
Bharat: it’s absurd.
Raj: it’s pointless.
Bharat: it’s tiresome.
Raj: Ring the bell, somebody. (Nalini, Act III, 51).

In this context it is apt to quote.

..........Their lives are repetitious, as is eminently shown in on characters self description..........Their situation seems even more pitiable than that of Beckett’s two tramps. They are not even waiting for anything. (Blackwell, 1976, 268).
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CHAPTER III

The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce and

Marriage Poem: A Fusion of the Eastern and Western
Post-modernist Theatrical Techniques
The Sleepwalkers is an Indo-American farce satirizing the fascination of Indians for Americans. The play is a satire on Indian-American relationship. It is a one act play based on the theme “Give us this day our daily American” (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 84). The play was first performed in 1985 by Theatre group. The play presents a subtle criticism of American and Indian society. The play presents before us the modern society which is extremely artificial. Hence, a farce aimed at arousing explosive laughter by employing crude means. The play begins with the chant:

“Give us this day our daily American”

Our American wheat
Our American sunshine
Our American air. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 84).

And ends at “Give us this day our daily American” (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 84). It will be quite pertinent to quote the line:

......sleepwalkers written in the style of Absurd Theatre and the plays of Jean Genet, in the use of masks to suggest stereotypes or hypocritical posing......(Iyer, 1985, 68).

The title of the play Sleepwalkers is ironical. The Indians are sleepwalkers in every sense of the word. American becomes substitute for bread, import substitutes. The title of the play is very apt because all the characters act like Sleepwalkers. They all sleepwalk around Mr. and Mrs.
Morris. They do not have their own sense, they just believe what the American couple say. They all sleepwalk around the couple. All want to impress the couple for their own advance they discuss about their work and profession to impress the couple. In every sense all the characters in the play are sleepwalkers. The play can be summed up in the words of Brahma Dutta Sharma, who says:

"... In his play Sleepwalkers Ezekiel ridicules Indians’ love of foreign especially American goods and even ideas. Like the Christians, who pray to God, “God, give us our daily bread”. The Indians in Ezekiel’s play say. “God, give us our daily American”. In other words Ezekiel means to say that for some Indians an American is a source of bread. The state of affairs deserves pity and since it is rooted in people’s misperception of things, it deserves to be ridiculed too. Americans have become rich not because they have imported wealth but because, first, they are rich in their resources, especially the land, secondly, they have acquired sophistication in the fields of science and technology and thirdly, they succeed in selling their produce on very handsome prices. No doubt, one who has wares will look for a buyer, but in this case the American too is a seller rather than a buyer so here a group of sellers waiting for a buyer get only a seller and has to face consequently only disappointment. (Sharma, 1995, 106)."

The plot of *The Sleepwalkers* is straightforward, simple and is improbable. *The Sleepwalkers* is one act farce which is tautly constructed. The plot has a beginning, middle and an end which moves further with the help of characters, events and actions. The play begins and ends on the same note. There are thirteen characters of which five are married couples and all the characters belong to literate class and eagerly wait for an American couple. The setting of the play is the drawing room, where all the action takes place.
Mr. Raman: “Give us thing day our daily American”

Mr. Kapur: Our American Education Advisor….. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,84).

The setting is the visual environment which suggests time and place and creates a proper mood or atmosphere for the reader or the spectators. It can be quoted in this regard:

........Theatrical space is at its most complex in the sleepwalker, which features an ‘Airport back centre, drawing room in the foreground.’(Anklesaria,2008,542).

The whole play revolves around different Indian characters and their wish to get benefit from an American couple. They all praise America and America couple. The playwright presents before us the realistic picture of different professions and the Indian mind-set and thinking giving importance to American people. The whole plot deals with the life of the common people. It moves from one point and end at the same point. It starts with the entrance of the American couple and ends at their departure. The play has one single incident i.e. coming of the American couple for the promotion of their magazine, who are welcomed by Indian guests who are shown to be in mask. It is a ludicrous situation. The setting of the play is the drawing room of an urban Indian city, Bombay. All the guests meet at this particular place. Bombay, the mini-India of today, is a meeting place of east and west.

........Once again, the drawing-room is the place where English India meets the world – the American as well as the other Indians once again, the drawing-room more so than in the other two plays, where it also has redeeming features is a
In the play, the drawing room serves a different purpose; it becomes the meeting place of American and Indian. The playwright creates an atmosphere of the English society but the reactions of the Indian characters are typically Indian. It will be apt to quote in this context:

"The drawing room covers slightly different spaces of analysis, description and narration... The culture-vulture, foreign-facing space of largely – official ‘creativity’ and ‘Social welfare’ in the sleepwalkers... (Anklesaria, 2008,547)."

The play has some elements of Absurd Theatre as most of the characters experience a sense of hollowness which is an intrinsic feature of modern drama. Ezekiel presents a human condition which is essentially absurd since the characters are in search of their identity. They all walk in a circular motion around the American couple. Their actions seem to be senseless and useless. The dialogues are like those in absurd drama and are repetitive and suggest a breakdown of communication but in fact it’s a mode of meaningful communication at the level of plot, theme and characters. The name of the magazine ‘Blank’ reflects the thoughtlessness and hollowness. The word itself signifies nothing. Mr. Morris, who is the editor and publisher of the American International magazine ‘Blank’, comes to India to sell the magazine and wants publicity for the magazine because India has a big population:

"Mr. Morris: I’ve got this magazine, see. It could be sold here to your people. Back in the states, it’s popular. Millions of copies are sold you have a big population, don’t you? (The Sleepwalkers,1969,87)."
The name of the magazine displays thoughtlessness when all the guests ask about the magazine, Mr. Morris defines that the motive of his magazine is to avoid excessive thinking. He elaborates:

Mr. Morris: ..........what is the chief cause of division and unhappiness? Thinking! If we discourage thought, we shall decrease unhappiness...... Thinking divides humanity into warring groups. In my magazine, there is no thought. We only describe we don’t say something is good and something else is bad. We merely report. We present it..... *(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 89).*

The motive of the magazine makes us laugh at the situation. The magazines name itself is without anything. As Mr. Morris say:

Mr. Morris: ..........It’s merely to help you avoid thought when you’re reading. That helps you to avoid thought when you’re not reading.....*(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 92).*

Talking about the magazine, he says that there is no humour in his magazine, there is no serious philosophy, yet it sounds thought provoking. It presents the superficiality of the American couple and their magazine, which is without any motive; as Mr. Marris describes:

Mr. Morris: ..........there is no humour in my magazine. When you laugh, you laugh at something, at somebody. The person laughed at is separated from the person laughing. This divides humanity. Individuals laughing at one another leads to nations laughing at one another, and ultimately to conflicts...... He who does not laugh, neither shall he weep. *(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 91).*
Through the magazine of Mr. Morris the writer brings the affects of media and modern technology on the thinking of modern man and comments on the modern world and technology which made human being inconsiderate. As Mr. Morris says:

Mr. Morris: In the modern world we have marvellous technological means for neutralising thought. My magazine is merely a humble effort to further that cause. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, p. 92).

Ezekiel’s personality, background and social and artistic temperament are responsible for the treatment of his themes. One of the themes of *The Sleepwalkers* which occurs is the Indian habit of always looking up to the Americans as their ideals. One of them is, editor, another, journalist; one is Gujarati poet another, short story writer in Hindi and a Bengali playwright. All the characters are masked. Mr. and Mrs. Morris arrive in India to promote their magazine; all the Indian guests are seen praising the American couple. The play depicts an insight that the Indians should go back to the wisdom enshrined in their own cultural heritage instead of running after the American way of life and ideologies. All the Indians gathered around Mr. Morris make attempts to impress him in various ways. This is discernable in short pieces of conversation quoted below from the text. Mr. Varma, who is a short story writer of Hindi, asks Mr. Morris about his work:

Mr. Varma: Will your magazine be needing Hindi short stories, Mr. Morris? (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, p. 87)

Same like Mr. Varma. Miss Ganguli also said:

Miss Ganguli: Bengal has hundreds of great playwrights, Mr. Morris. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, p. 88).
The name of the magazine displays thoughtlessness when all the guests ask about the magazine, Mr. Morris defines that the motive of his magazine is to avoid excessive thinking. He elaborates:

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Same like Mr. Varma. Miss Ganguli also said:

Miss Ganguli: Bengal has hundreds of great playwrights, Mr. Morris. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 88).
Mr. Raman, who is a journalist, said:

Mr. Raman: Do you need correspondents in India?
Mr. Kapur: You will need editions in the Indian languages.
Mr. Morris
Mr. Varma: My stories are perfectly suitable for your magazine, Mr. Morris. My critics say that they are totally without thought. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 90).

The play opens with a note of high appreciation for the Americans.

The content of the ‘mantra’ (chant) is western in spirit yet traditional in its tonal supplications.

Our American town planner
Our American traffic control expert
Our American Educational Advisor

Our American Sunshine
Our American Air (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 84).

Ezekiel seems to make sarcastic comments on the Indian population:

Mr. Morris: .......... We visited Japan. We just loved Japan, my wife and I. Great place Japan. So we thought, Why not India this year, another great place. I’ve got this magazine, see. It could be sold here to your people – Back in the states, its popular. Millions of copies are sold. You have a big population, don’t you!
Prof. Shah: Five hundred million people.

Mr. Morris: Five hundred million, Christ. Takes your breath away, doesn’t it?
Prof. Shah: It takes our breath away, Mr. Morris. We can hardly breathe. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 87).

Prof. Shah compares American modernity with Indian traditional values:
India is culturally rich, Mr. Morris, though economically backward. Our spiritual life is so much better compared to materialistic America. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 88).

Prof. Shah: We give you spiritual aid, you give us financial aid.

In another instance Mr. Raman says:

Mr. Raman: You give us training in journalism. We attack you in our journals. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 88).

Mr. Kapur makes a light hearted remark on the nature of women in India:

Mr. Kapur: A magazine without thought will be popular with Indian women, Mr. Morris. We get along peacefully without thought. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 90).

A witty and meaningful exchange of views is observed in the following dialogues between Prof. Shah and Mr. Morris,

Prof. Shah: In this country, Mr. Morris, the ideal of many of us is to transcend thought, to reach a state of mind where thought is unnecessary.

Mr. Morris: We Americans find that too high for us we prefer to be below thought not above it. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 90).

Ezekiel portrays professional behavior of the Indians and depicts social reality in different dimensions. The characters reflect Indian traditional thinking and approach to various issues and aspects of modern life.

Besides all the other themes associated with the disillusionment of the modern man in the play, Ezekiel comes up with the theme of alienation. The modern urban man’s existence is marked with a quest for identity. They suffer alienation and struggle hard to survive in a complex and competitive world around them. In their respective efforts all the
characters follow the American couple blindly. It is evident through such characters as Mr. Varma, Miss Ganguli, Mr. Raman and Mr. Kapur. Ezekiel groping for identity at times appears to reflect an East-west dichotomy. All characters, Mr. Varma, Miss Ganguli, Mr. Kapur, Mrs. Kapur have position in the society, they all are educated yet they have no real individuality. They all are in search of identity by associating themselves with Mr. and Mrs. Morris, the American couple. They all hide their suffering by pretending. Social and cultural environment is responsible for estrangement of the individual in *The Sleepwalkers*. The India characters find themselves in an amusing and humorous situation; they all entirely depend on the American guests and as they have no self respect due to lack of traditional insights and faith in their own native values, the Indians find themselves in an insecure and isolated position *vis-a-vis* the Americans. Language is another important factor which dissociates people from one another. As the conversation reveals:

Mr. Morris: Have you been to the tates?
Mr. Kapur: Yes, I was there last year.
Mrs. Morris: (to Mrs Kapur) Did you accompany your husband, Mrs. Kapur?
Mrs. Kapur: No, ‘I couldn’t go. At that time I was expecting.

Here the word ‘expecting’ dissociates the American listener and the Indian speaker.

Dress can also differentiate between people. Mrs. Morris and Mrs. West wear different dresses where as Mrs. Raman is shown wearing a sari. Another instance of alienation is the statement of Mr. Varma who is a writer of Hindi:
Mr. Varma: No, in Hindi, India’s national language one hundred and eighty seven short stories in Hindi. Also four hundred and seventeen poems. In Hindi I am one of the well-know writers. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, 85).

But he urges Mr. Morris to print his stories in his magazine:

Mr. Varma: Will your magazine be needing Hindi short stories, Mr. Morris? (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, 87).

Further he says:

Mr. Varma: My stories are perfectly suitable for your magazine, Mr. Morris. My critics say that they are totally without thought. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969, 90).

The way Mr. Varma reacts is the perfect example of alienation. Due to Ezekiel’s own experience in different areas like editing, teaching, advertising, anthologizing and writing, he is able to portray before the audience a realistic picture of the modern urban society, which is multidimensional and multicultural. Ezekiel also employs the techniques of realism in the play. He displays a reality of the various aspects of Indian life, and shows reality through the characters. It will be apt to quote the words of Brahma Dutt Sharma:

"........In his poems as well as in his plays Nissim Ezekiel exposes peoples especially his countrymen’s follies, foibles, weaknesses and deficiencies and often seems to be trying to laugh them into honestly, sincerity, efficiency....like. (Sharma, 1995, 4)."

He points towards the over population of India. Another reality is focused when Prof. Shah talks about India which is culturally rich and economically backward. The playwright makes a comparison between
India and America. And again the comparison is made between the two, as Mr. Morris says:

**Mr. Morris:** Gee, that’s’ tremendous we Americans are productivity conscious, but only in industry. In literature you beat us hollow, Mr. Varma. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969,94).

Ezekiel brings out his own experience and encounters with people at different places and is able to portray the Indian realities on the stage. Ezekiel also shows the reality of journalism. In India, journals have financial purpose. They are meant to promote particular brand, they have no real worth and motive. As Mr. Kapur said:

**Mr. Kapur:** It’s called the Indian Automobile, Mr. Morris. It’s devoted to helping owners of Indian automobiles to cope with them. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969,93).

The playwright exposes the reality of the rural population of India and the working of the Indian Government system. The professional playwrights use art forms to promote tourism, trade and business. The real Indian rarely appears in their attempts to earn money and project suppressed presentations. Miss Ganguli laments:

----------I’m commissioned to write plays by the Government of India. The themes are supplied by the Government. (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969,93).

The spiritual hollowness of the American couple is reflected in the play when Mr. Morris remarks:

**Mr. Morris:** That’s true. We Americans are certainly materialist. In spiritual matters, we have a great deal to learn from you........ (*The Sleepwalkers*, 1969,88).
The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce

Their magazine also shows their futility. Thus the playwright represents life and the social world as it seems to common reader. The playwright ridicules the way women are treated in the pseudo-civilized society of contemporary India:

Mrs. Raman: O no, our husbands drink whisky, we drink orange juice.
Mrs. Kapur: Our husbands eat meat we eat vegetables.
Prof. Shah: .....This is division of labour....... (The Sleepwalkers, 1969,86).

The typical Indian style of living, especially of pseudo-civilized society in which women do not enjoy equality of status, pointed out by Ezekiel. Women are supposed to be inferior to men even in the civilized society. They do not get equal status as their male counterpart. It focuses on the typical man woman relationship phenomenon in Indian. Both the women, Mrs. Raman and Mrs. Kapur conversation highlights their inferiority complex.

Ezekiel focuses on the social position of women in the male dominated socio-cultural contexts. Ezekiel conveys his feminist perspective regarding Indian women in his plays through female characters.

...Ezekiel's plays, like Bernard Shaw often appears as mouth pieces of the dramatist especially his views regarding women and their writings. Though Ezekiel felt that men and women should always be equal yet from time he has betrayed this sense of equality...... (Iyer,1985,69).

Ezekiel, who is himself a playwright, creates Miss Ganguli’s character who too is a playwright. She deals mainly with the treatment of the themes associated with Indian village life. Miss Ganguli ironically remarks that her plays are neither acknowledged nor accepted by the Indians as their true depiction. She candidly confesses to Mrs. Morris:
**Mrs. Morris:** ...Do the villagers like your plays, Miss. Ganguli?

**Miss Ganguli:** I'll be honest with you, I’ll be frank, they don’t. *(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 93)*.

Here Nissim Ezekiel presents the character of Mrs Ganguli as a creative artist who makes compromises with her creative urge to make it an instrument to face the challenges and complications of the modern life. She writes under strict government control and sponsorship about restricted themes related to government policies and agendas. Miss Ganguli says:

**Mr. Morris:** What kind of themes?

**Miss Ganguli:** Mostly connected with family planning. *(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 93)*.

After the performance of the play the villagers still seem unconvinced of the need for family planning as described by Mr. Morris:

**Morris:** ....What happens after the villagers have seen the plays? Are they convinced of the need for family planning?

**Ganguli:** O, they are convinced all right. But they can’t do anything about it. *(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 93)*.

Even the answer of Miss Ganguli is full of sarcasm when she said:

...you see the villagers don’t have any, they don’t have any....I mean, they can’t practice what we preach,......*(The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 94)*.

Here, the stark reality of the Indian rural scenario is displayed where the people are deprived of basic understanding about the fundamental needs. They seem to be ignorant of the population control measures. They hardly believe in costly mode of recreation as they cannot afford it. In a way they fail to understand the connectivity between family planning
and the quality of existence. Religion and culture in India is a big obstacle unlike the western and developed countries where family planning is adopted readily by the people to ensure its huge success.

Miss Ganguli: .....Mr. Morris, all your foundations know about it, and they all help, many of them help, but you see, we are five hundred million, and most of us are in the villages, and there’s no entertainment in the villages or anything like that you know, the way you have night clubs, and so on. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969,94).

Here we notice that though the villagers do not have the basic things in the villages yet they are planning to establish a night club. It evokes laughter and puts a sarcastic remark on the programme of cultural and economic exchange between India and America, because there is no use of establishing night clubs in villages. It reflects the disorientation, superficiality and lack of channelization of the programme. He points out the difficulties and challenges faced by the policy makers in implementation of family planning measures in the rural India.

The writer diverts our attention to the superficial life of the modern urban man who has become insensitive to the cultural values. The human psyche undergoes a change due to rapid urbanization and modernization. The magazine of Mr. Morris is also a means to present the insignificance of man in the present era:

Mrs. Morris: ....... Lots of pictures and things. People want pictures these days. You’ve got to give it to them. I mean to say, words are all very well in their own way. I got nothing against words, but the pictures the thing, that’s what I say.........(The Sleepwalkers,1969,87).
He makes comments on the English spoken by the Indians; Mr. Varma is translating his work into English and says:

*Mr. Varma: Some I have translated in English, but I am not knowing English. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 86).*

Ezekiel presents a contrast between Indian and Western standards of academic accountability. To an extent Indians lack experimentation, innovation, and are less updated in their professional fields. Prof. Shah illustrates this in the context of his teaching practice.

*Mr. Morris: You combine teaching and writing, don’t you Prof. Shah? You must find teaching takes up a lot of your time. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 92).*

*Prof. Shah: Only the mornings, Mr. Morris. My afternoons and evenings are free.*

*Prof. Shah: My lectures were all prepared twenty years ago...*

*Prof. Shah: The notes I prepared as a student, Mr. Morris twenty years ago I use those. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 93).*

Ezekiel, in this play, criticizes the concept of consumerism. Through the publicity mania he portrays the reality of the commercial world. In the modern times publicity is an important factor. Mr. Morris and Mrs. Morris come to India for the publicity of their magazine. They both are not confident about their magazine which focuses on ‘thoughtlessness’. They use the means of publicity for their magazine rather than the actual worth. The writer projects traditional India through his characters. Mr. Raman describes the topics on which he is writing a report:

*Mr. Raman: I don’t know anything about that, Mr. Morris. I specialise in reporting strikes, protests, processions, and so on.*

*Mrs. Morris: That must be very interesting.*
Ezekiel takes up the issue of his countrymen’s inadequacy to tackle their problems.

The playwright ridicules the way the Indians converse in English. Some of the characters speak an inter language in which several rules of the Indian languages have been employed in the words and sentences of English. Ezekiel, through his own observation and experience of the languages spoken in India, employs the Indian English which is spoken by the Indians. Mr. Varma translates his work into English but he actually has no proper knowledge of the language. The programme of cultural and economic exchange India and America also becomes the target of Ezekiel’s satire.

The theory of post-colonialism can be applied to the play The Sleepwalkers. Peter Barry says,

"...The superiority of what is European or Western, and the inferiority of what is not..." (Barry, 2007, 192).

Thus, the play is based on the concept of the superiority of the whites over the non-whites. Due to the colonial effect the psyche of Indians has undergone a huge transformation and they regard the Americans as superior to them.

After colonization Indians are in search of their real identity. This conflicting and unstable identity is the chief cause of their thoughtlessness and hollowness. Ezekiel presents before us a cross-cultural interaction which is one of the characteristics of post-colonial
criticism. As all the characters belong to the educational class they interact with the people of the other cultures and thereby it affects their thinking. Due to this they seem to neglect their own culture and praise foreign culture. Mr. Raman says:

Mr. Raman: No, in English. I studied journalism in New York.

Mr. Morris: How delightful. We sail in the same boat, Mr. Kapur. Have you been to the states?
Mr. Kapur: Yes, I was there last year (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 85).

Miss Ganguli remarks,

Miss Ganguli: Bengali has the most advanced literature in India, Mrs. Morris, according to foreign observers. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 86).

A critic observed that the play of Nissim Ezekiel don’t deal with an individual character and its development, rather, he says,

......In all four plays the characters are distinctly and purposely types, for it is the situation that is central and dominant. There is no psychological development, these are not plays of individual character analysis, and that is most clearly seen in the types involved in the Sleepwalkers. (Blackwell,268).

Ezekiel presents before us such of the characters who compromise their self respect by exposing themselves.

Miss Ganguli : This will be a very good thing for Bengal people think too much there that’s why all this stone throwing and burning of buses if we had less thinking we could have stable Government.

Prof. Shah : In this country, Mr. Morris, the ideas of many of us is to transcend thought, to reach
The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce

a state of mind where thought is unnecessary. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 90).

Through Mr. Morris, Ezekiel brings out the reality behind Indian and American programmes. Regarding Mr. Morris, it may be quoted:

...... There is a peculiar connection between Mr. Morris and Bharat (Nalini) so far as ‘thoughtlessness’ is concerned. Between thoughtlessness and intellect there is not only a conflict but also a diametric opposition. This paradigm is dear to the playwright and this has not found expression in Indo-English Drama so prominently before Ezekiel. (Sharma, 1995, 92).

Mrs. Shah is a lady who remains silent throughout the play. She only shows her response by shaking her head or by the gesture of body. Another character is Mr. Raman and Mrs. Raman, Mr. Raman is a journalist who also wants to get benefit from Mr. Morris.

Through his characters Ezekiel present how modern men go abroad for higher studies Mr. Raman who studies journalism in New York, but again sarcastically Ezekiel comments on the traditional Indian concept of arrange marriage. Through the statement of Mrs. Raman:

Mrs. Morris : How sweet of him? How are you Mrs. Raman. Did you go with your husband to New York?

Mrs. Raman : No, our marriage was arranged after he came back. (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 85).

Mr. Kapur and Mrs. Kapur is another couple Mr. Kapur is an editor who wants to benefit from Mr. Morris foundation that launches a magazine in India. Mr. Kapur says:
The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce

.... You will need editions in the Indian languages Mr. Morris. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,96).

Mr. Varma is a short story writer who writes in Hindi. He also writes poems and translates into English. He say in his own praise,

No, in Hindi, India’s national language. One hundred and eighty seven short stories in Hindi. Also, four hundred and seventeen poems. In Hindi I am one of the well-known writers. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,85).

My stories are perfectly suitable for your magazine, Mr. Morris. My critics say that they are totally without thought. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,90).

He wishes to publish his stories in Mr. Morris magazine which is based on thoughtlessness.

Mr. Verma : Some I have translated in English but I am not knowing English very nicely. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,86).

Through his character, Ezekiel satirizes the Hindi writer who writes amply but his work has no validity because he lacks the ability to use correct English. The playwright reveals the diction of the Indians as they speak English with dialectical varieties. One of the dialogues of Mr. Varma expresses the comparative merits of Hindi playwright against the English.

Mr Varma: Hindi is also having hundreds of great playwrights only world is not knowing about them. (The Sleepwalkers,1969,88).

Miss Ganguli is a Bengali playwright. She also follows Mr. Morris like the other characters for professional gain. She talks about playwrights. ‘Bengal has hundreds of great playwrights, Mr. Morris’. Ezekiel wants to put forward the case of rich regional theatre in theatre with special
emphasis on Bengali playwrights who come at par with excellence of the modern and classical English theatre.

Ezekiel makes a special mention of women characters in this play as a blend of traditional and the modern. He depicts creative women like Miss Ganguli against a stereotype house wife character Mrs. Shah. These noteworthy female characters express a diversity of women’s experiences in the contemporary Indian society through their preferences, values and choices are different from that of the American ones. Indian women are projected through the character of Miss Ganguli and Mrs. Shah considerably independent and individualized model of western women is projected through Mrs.Morris’s character.

Ezekiel presents a blend of tradition and modernity in almost all the thematic and technical aspects of the play. The earlier section has dealt considerably in expressing this combination at the level of theme, characterization, plot, situation, actions, dialogues, devices and setting. Ezekiel prefers to give stage directions in this play as he anticipates a lack of action and difficulties related to performance of the play in the theatre. Technical direction facilitate this seemingly modern content of the play to be performed with technical expertise on the Indian stage

Regarding the technique of the plays of Ezekiel, Shyam Ashani writes:

......In all the three plays, the playwright seems to be conscious of the stage problems as is evinced in his emphasis on scene and setting, sound and light acoustics, mask, music, hints within parentheses about the gestures and moods of the actors and other stage directions. But for want of adequate action, their stage worthiness is doubtful. However, they do make a pleasant reading matter.... (Singh,1997,100).
The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce

The play *Sleepwalkers* is a continuous blend of not only modern and traditional theatrical devices but also an effective merger of sound and light, mask and music, actions and pauses, words and silences. In *The Sleepwalkers*, music plays an important role. The use of music is a technique which Ezekiel uses in his play very well. It is one of the important theatrical devices used by the dramatists. In the beginning only the sound of aeroplane is heard. No other music is heard before the play begins. And again the sound of teleprinter heard. He also employs the voices which tell something about the play. The first voice in the form of background narration is heard by the audience:

**Voice:** The editor and publisher of the American International magazine Blank, Mr. Edward Morris, is expected to arrive in Bombay shortly for a three-week tour of India..........(*The Sleepwalkers*,1969,84).

Again the voices are heard, the words of Mr. and Mrs. West are not heard by the audience. Ezekiel also employs the effects of lights which is visible in the drawing room. At the end of the play the sound of the teleprinter is heard then a voice reading.

**Voice:** Mr. Edward Morris, editor and publisher of the new American International magazine Blank, met a number of Indian writers and journalists during his short stay in Bombay..... (*The Sleepwalkers*,1969,95).

In the end the sound effects begin again. Lights reflect in the drawing room. In the play various conventional elements of stagecraft are used which are integral to the action of the play. Lightening on the stage serves the function to make the performers visible and creates the mood, and control the focus of the audience. Its primary function is to highlight the characters on the stage. The stage in the play is divided into two parts.
One part of the stage is illuminated at one time. There are two basic types of stage lighting; one floodlights which lighten the broad area, and the spot light which focuses intensely on a smaller area. Music is used as one of the common sound effects. It includes any sound which is created by the performer. The sound on the stage makes the play appear to be realistic. Airport roar and ticking of a teleprinter provide the background music. The playwright employs technique of the fusion of sound and light on the stage to give a hint about the prominent setting of the play.

...Sound of aeroplane overhead well before the curtain opens, intensifying as it does. No other music before the play begins. From time to time, a standard arrival or departure announcement is made, heard by the audience in a somewhat muffled and incomplete form. Whirr of propellers, noise of engines, crowd voices rising and falling, footsteps approaching and moving away. Hooting of automobile horns, raucous shouting of porters, and the occasional barking of a dog, twice, clearly, the mooing of a cow...... (The Sleepwalkers, 1969, 83).

The dramatist employs sound effects as a stage device in various forms to sustain and enhance the theatricality of the performance.

Another effective theatrical device is costume design which refers to what the performers wear on the stage. Costume reveals information about the characters, describes their mood, setting and indicates social class and personality trait of the characters. In the play, the American guests are in different dresses and rest of the cast i.e. Indian guests are in masks. Women are presented in sari, the typical Indian dress. Thus, the costume conveys information about the characters. Ezekiel uses an unconventional technique. When he presents the characters in mask
(type), Ezekiel seems to deliberately 

distinguish from the mention of identity

as it's a derived technique from the western theatre and traditions of ball
dance, mask dance and such festivities. In the beginning the description is
given about the mask:

....The Indian guests are in masks. They are a varied lot but it is

not necessary to describe them. Their physical characteristics,
clothes, etc. Can be easily imagined by the director. He should
seek to “type” them and avoid individuality. (The
Sleepwalkers,1969,83).

Here, Indian theatre seems to attain vitality with a perfect blend of
Eastern and Western theatre insight. All the characters are shown
wearing mask. They all wear masks which reflect their unthinking
dependence on the foreigners. Due to mask, performers look more like
puppets as it makes the face expressionless and incommunicable. Their
expression depends on voice and gesture. Mr. Morris is shown to be
masked when he appears at the top of the ramp with his wife behind
him:

......... The audience now sees the two American couples

advancing front centre. They are wearing masks......... (The
Sleepwalkers,1969,84).

In the end again Mr. and Mrs. Morris appear at the top of the ramp in
new masks. The frequent changes in the masks express an identity crisis
that is a conspicuous feature of contemporary theatre. Ezekiel puts it
as a direction:

.... (Mr. and Mrs. Morris appear again at the top of the ramp,
in new masks, run down the ramp,......). (The Sleepwalkers,
1969,95).
Ezekiel applies this technique to make his play appear modern in content and impact. Masks are more revelatory in his plays. As the appearance of the mask is expressionless, the characters appear and seem to hold identity as a type. The characters, lacking in personal and individual identity register a claim for greater universality. The technique of mask promises to provide greater fluidity and flexibility to the performers, as a performer puts it:

"...When I put on the mask I become impersonal. It is easier to step into the body of another character. The face is not required to express, it passes its function to the body. (Gargi, 1962, 176)."

Witty dialogues, puns, word play, and farcical laughter have a special role to play in comic performances in the theatre. The play *Sleepwalkers* presents comic effects through the use of appropriate diction. William Meridith writes:

"... Words are inhabited by the accumulate experiences of the tribe the average adds about as much to the language as he does to the nitrogen content of his native soil. But he can administer the force that resides in words. (Sharma, 1995, 192)."

The play achieves its comic effects not by broad humour and bustling action but by the sustained brilliance and wit of the dialogue. The way all praise American couple seems to be comic:

- **Mr. Raman:** Give us this day our daily American.
- **Rest of the cast:** Give us this day our daily American.
- **Prof. Shah:** Our American town planner.
- **Mr. Raman:** Our American traffic control expert.
- **Mr. Kapur:** Our American educational advisor.
- **Mr. Varma:** Our American textile design director.
- **Prof. Shah:** Our American architect for the national center of the performing arts.
Almost every dialogue is full of humour. The way English is spoken by Mr. Varma and the other characters when they interact with the native English character Mr. Morris is indeed humorous. The play is a mixture of traditional and modern technique and reflection of contemporary life and experience. All the characters are urban educated people who encounter the American guest, but the issues which they discuss are rooted in conventional Indian value pattern. They are seemingly modern but they deal with conventional Indian lifestyle.

Ezekiel remarks on the impact and reception of the play 'Sleepwalkers'. In an interview with Zubin Driver Ezekiel say:

**Zubin Driver:** What made you write the Sleepwalkers? It is a very slight farce which merely portrays the attitude of Indians and Americans. It doesn’t analyze the complexity of the phenomenon.

**Ezekiel:** It is meant to be what it is. I would not deny the serious aspect of such a situation, but that is taken in one’s stride. If you have eight to ten such experiences, they tend to manifest themselves. Take poetry readings, for instance. Somebody asks a ridiculous question like “Do you write poetry in the mornings or at night?” and disrupts
The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce

the whole atmosphere. Now that kind of attitude interests me, which is not to say that I am dismissing the serious aspects of a poetry reading. It just means that I am not attracted to dealing with those aspects in terms of theatre. In any case, I would not make any big claims about the Sleepwalkers. (Anklesaria, 2008, 65).

To conclude, it can be established in the light of the arguments and descriptions given to trace the development of the play as an Indo-American farce. The blend of tradition and modernity is discernable in the theme, characterization, plot, action, diction, devices, comic sequences, setting and impact. The message and philosophy does not appear in the fore front and the play aptly justifies the manners and morals of the Indians and Americans on two contrasting social contexts. A delightful environment prevails throughout the play to mark the emergence of a light-hearted theatre for entertainment. The contemporary impact of cinematography is visible in the use of sound, light and mask. Ezekiel thus experiments a fusion of modern technique with traditional Indian thematic concerns.
The play *Marriage Poem* was published in 1969, in the *Three Plays*. It is second play by Ezekiel after *Nalini*. In August 1988, it was performed at the Alliance Francaise Theatre in Bombay directed by Patric Beck. It is a one act tragi-comedy which is domestic in content. *Marriage Poem* is a simpler play which reveals the dark and bright sides of the institution of marriage. In a very small setting, it explores the upper middle class marriage. It has six characters; of them there are two married couple and two women, one of them being the friend of one of the husbands. *Marriage Poem* reflects how extra-marital adventure and misunderstanding can wreck a happy family life. It begins on a quiet domestic lively conversation between husband and wife, Mala and Naresh. The play is about a situation, a perfunctory domestic situation and depicts the failure of a middle-class marriage in which the wife and husband nag and love, fight and talk. Their life is full of skirmishes and conflicts, which provide humour. It will be apt to quote in this respect,

...marriage poem is steeped in the common happenings of everyday life and Ezekiel extracts drama out of it. The stuff of drama lies, not in ‘accidents’ but in ‘incidents’ for accidents are unnatural where as incidents are normal and natural... (Sharma, 1995, 90).
The disturbed life of Mala and Naresh is represented throughout the play by Ezekiel. He points out the life of contemporary man and also criticizes at the institution of marriage.

Ezekiel’s dramatic technique is superb and flawless. The plots in his plays are precise and straightforward. The device of parallelism, contrast, and satire help in the logical development of the plot. His characters are vivid. Both plot and characters are co-related and promote the unity of effect or impression.

Marriage Poem centres on the marriage theme i.e. unhappy marriage. There are other themes which recur; the theme of the other women, possessiveness of man-woman relationship and the hollowness which occurs in married life due to extra-marital relationship. The marriage theme is not new but the way the dramatist presents it, makes it a modern play. Ezekiel also presents the possessiveness in the man-woman relationship which is related to the problem of identity and contemporary man. Ezekiel portrays the realistic situation and incident which are common; hence this return to normal or natural is his admirable contribution to the modern drama. The central issue in the Marriage Poem is ‘unhappy marriage’, and this unhappiness occurs due to lack of understanding. The hollowness occurs in the married life of Mala and Naresh due to extra-marital affair. This growing chasm of misunderstanding between them wrecks their marriage. The playwright develops our perception of an unsuccessful marriage. As Moutushi Chakravartee commented in Essays on Nissim Ezekiel,
... In marriage poem, the central problem veers round the so-called ‘unhappy’ marriage. But happiness is a utopia that one craves for, without ever achieving it ....... (Sharma, 1995, 90).

The conversation between Mala and Naresh shows that they are unhappy. The reason of their unhappiness and suffering is Leela. Mala says to Naresh

Mala: ... are you in a bad mood all day in the office too? Or are the bad moods reserved for me? (Marriage Poem, 60).

The wife and husband live together under the same roof, experiencing emptiness, loneliness and alienation as Naresh says,

Naresh: ... I am alone. It has taken me a long time to learn how to be alone (Marriage Poem, 74).

Both are unsatisfied with their married life. Naresh, who loves Leela, is unable to understand the love of his wife, and Mala, who loves her husband, very much is unable to get back the same response and love from him. She confesses to Mrs. Lall,

Mala: I won’t give up my husband either. He’s married to me. He’s my husband. We have two children. I’ll never give him up. (Marriage Poem, 65).

It is the quest in Naresh for communication and feeling of sharing that leads him towards Leela in whom he finds warmth, friendship, understanding and compassion. It is evident that Mala is virtually devoid of communication with Naresh and this was the cause of confusion and lack of understanding and love between husband and wife. Naresh says to Leela that he loves her, not his wife Mala, but he is aware of the reality that he has a wife who loves him.
Marriage Poem: A Tragi-comedy

Naresh: what about my wife?
Leela: She doesn’t exist,
Naresh: She does, for me,
Leela: As a ghost only.
Naresh: The ghost who talks.
Leela: The ghost who nags.
Naresh: The ghost who bore me two children......
Naresh: She loves me thats why it’s easy to make love to
her, even now.
Leela: ... I don’t believe she loves you
Mala: ... She does
Leela: ...all those things you tell me against her! How can
she say and do all that if she loves you? *(Marriage
Poem,68).*

Naresh: I don’t know, but she does, in her own way.
*(Marriage Poem,69).*

Naresh realises the reality that his wife loves him, but at a same time he is
not able to stop loving Leela. Lack of understanding is a factor that is
responsible for the gap between Mala and Naresh. Naresh never feels
guilty. He says,

Naresh: But I don’t love her, I can’t I love you. *(Marriage
Poem,69).*

Mala is a victim of incompatibility of matrimonial relationship. Her
marriage with Naresh turns out to be a vanishing search for love and
understanding Mala very much wants her husband Naresh to recognize
her love and compassion which she feels should form the base of their
relationship.

Mala: He doesn’t know what’s good for him. He wouldn’t be
happy with any other woman. I look after him well. He’s put
on twenty pounds since he married me. He’s happy with me but he doesn’t know it... \textit{(Marriage Poem,66)}.

Both the couple nag each other all the time. They both are not satisfied with each other. Naresh is busy in writing letters and forgets to do the works of Mala. He even denies the offer of having tea with his wife Mala in the evening.

\textbf{Mala}: you always distort everything I say. I like waiting for you because I want the pleasure of having tea with you in the evenings. So in the morning....
\textbf{Naresh}: ... It’s no pleasure. \textit{(Marriage Poem,60)}.

There are other instances which represent the fragmented life of the couple. Mala and Naresh talk about having tea and bread, which is a typical Indian trait of housewives, and which displays the gesture of togetherness, but it has no value in the eyes of Naresh.

\textbf{Naresh}: ... And dip a slice of bread in it for me ... put the slice of bread dipped in tea into my mouth....
\textbf{Mala}: I will, I will ...
\textbf{Naresh}: .. Thank you that was delicious
\textbf{Mala}: I love it too
\textbf{Naresh}: (raising his voice) I hate it. \textit{(Marriage Poem,61)}.

These incidents prove the conflicting and dissatisfied life of Mala and Naresh. Here the playwright depicts how extra-marital affairs can ruin the happiness and peace of the life of married couple. It would be apt to say in this context:

\begin{verbatim}
........Naresh has no love for his wife Mala. As a result, their married relationship ends in skirmishes and in amities .......
deals with a boring marriage relationship, it indicates the futility of tradition oriented system of wedding. Ezekiel’s fine
\end{verbatim}
realistic approach is discernible in these plays....... (Bhatnagar, 2001, 622).

The Woman has been Nissim Ezekiel’s major preoccupation in a sizeable portion of his drama in one way or the other. He has presented woman in various forms—as mother, wife, seductress, mistress, whore etc.

The theme of extra-marital relationships is also old but the way Ezekiel treats this theme focuses on the seriousness of the problem in the modern context. The superficial nature of marital relationship can be predicted through the dramatization of dream like the entrance and exit of the other woman Leela. Mala is a normal human being deeply in love with her husband. One can say that Mala does not feel quite at home in the presence of her husband. Her husband’s extreme emotional indifference and callousness have made her intensely vulnerable on the surface. She seems to be happy but she is far from it. Mala laments her experience of bitter loneliness in marital life.

Mala: If I could trust you, I’d trust every woman.
Naresh: if you can’t trust me, why don’t you give me up?
Mala: I’ll never give you up. (Marriage Poem, 76).

She is also possessive like Mrs. Lall. It is possessiveness which is a facet of man woman relationship, and up to some extent it is connected with the problem of identity. Ezekiel’s approach is unconventional as he avoids artificiality as well as theatricality. This coming back to nature is the sign of modernity. Ezekiel implies the outsider woman theme in the modern context, and the other woman in the play is Leela, with whom Naresh makes love and finds better company than his wife Mala. Naresh and
Leela both are aware of the reality of their relationship yet they appreciate each other and continue. Leela says,

Leela: O, my poor boy  
Naresh: Don’t pity me  
Leela: I ran half the way from the station. My train stopped between stations over and over again... *(Marriage Poem, 68).*  
Naresh: You don’t mind the secrecy, the lies, the danger of scandal?  
Leela: I don’t mind.  
Naresh: You don’t mind that we can meet only once a week? *(Marriage Poem, 68).*  
Leela: I don’t mind.

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Naresh: Does it upset you for me to say that my wife loves me?  
Leela: No, not at all  
Naresh: I see that it does  
Leela: Well, I suppose ‘its’ natural for me to be upset, I’m jealous of her. She has you all the time. I have you once a week, sometimes only for an hour.........  
Leela: I’m happy when I’m with you. I’m happy to be loved by you. *(Marriage Poem, 69).*

Hence, both Leela and Naresh are in love with each other but at the same time aware of their respective social realities too. Another female character, Malati, is the wife of Ranjit, with whom Naresh flirts in the presence of Mala. He talks to Malati in a poetical language and Malati also takes side of Naresh and seems to flirt with him. Naresh talks in a different way,

Naresh: ... I am alone it has taken me a long time to learn how to be alone. I’ve also learnt how to value to
condition. The whole world is recreated when one achieved it. All art, poetry, music everything that is true and beautiful is for the single man. Even nature exists only when a man sees her alone. Only when he is alone does she undress for him......

Mala: What kind of language is this?
Malati: The language of poetry. (Marriage Poem,74).

Ezekiel presents the possessiveness in the man-woman relationship which is also connected with the problem of identity. Mala is shown to be a possessive housewife, who knows reality, yet she cares for her husband. When she talks to Mrs. Lall she says,

Mala: He doesn’t know what’s good for him. He wouldn’t be happy with any other woman, I look after him well is put on twenty pounds since he married me. He’s happy with me but he doesn’t know it. He was as thin as a stick he dressed shabbily. His hair ran wild. He dresses well now. Everybody says so. His hair is under control. I force him to have a haircut every three weeks, I love him. I care for him. (Marriage Poem,66).

The playwright comments on the conscience of the man thereby showing that woman has every right to question her husband i.e. on fidelity as is evident from the conversation of Mala and Naresh

Mala: You can’t run away from me. You’re my husband.
Mala: It is the most important truth in my life.
Mala: That you’re my husband (Marriage Poem,79).

Marriage is one of the favourite themes of Ezekiel—a social institution to be depicted. Mala and Naresh quarrel with each other. They have a love hate relationship. Love and understanding are the essential qualities of a happy marriage which are missing in the lives of Mala and Naresh. By presenting this married couple the playwright attempts to focus on the
institution of marriage its dark and bright sides. The play also depicts how extra-marital relations or lack of understanding can create a disharmony in a happy married life. In conclusion, we may say that the happiness of married life is based on mutual love and sympathy.

\[
\text{Naresh: What is love without understanding? (Marriage Poem, 75).}
\]

\[
\text{Naresh: Why do you quarrel with me.....?}
\]
\[
\text{Mala: I don’t quarrel with you. You quarrel with me. (Marriage Poem, 76).}
\]

Ezekiel points out the hollowness in the married life of Mala and Naresh. Due to the lack of mutual understanding and thoughtlessness hollowness develops in the marriage. Ezekiel treated this theme in the mode of conventional theatre.

In Marriage Poem we encounter one more theme of infidelity and lack of security and mutual trust. Mala and Naresh both quarrel with each other, misunderstand each other, and their married life is affected due to the presence of another woman Leela. On the other hand he loves his wife Mala. He is crossed between his dream fantasy for Leela and his marital duty for Mala. Mala and Naresh’s conversation reveal this dilemma,

\[
\text{Mala: It’s true then ... you’re writing to one of your women, no doubt.}
\]
\[
\text{Naresh: Yes, I’m writing to Indira Gandhi ....... (Marriage Poem, 67).}
\]

Naresh know the fact clearly that his wife loves him. But he is the sort of man who could not decide properly. Naresh is aware of his love towards Leela, the woman of his dream but he also knows the fact that his wife
loves him sincerely; he has children yet, he is not able to decide his fate. He is always in a state of confusion.

**Naresh:** Why do we quarrel so much?
**Mala:** I don’t know. It’s because you don’t love me. *(Marriage Poem, 70)*.

**Naresh:** I can’t help that
**Mala:** you could love me if you decide to
**Naresh:** How can I decide to? These things are not decided by us. *(Marriage Poem, 71)*.

This statement proves that he cannot decide anything; hence, Ezekiel focuses on the inconsistent nature of love, in which he displays how a husband like Naresh has a fickle mindset which keeps changing all the time. Sometimes he loves Mala and praises the fact that she loves him and on the other hand, he finds himself in love with Leela deeply.

The theme of urban sensibility runs through the works of Nissim Ezekiel. The *Marriage Poem* is also placed in the city. Ezekiel provides an aerial view of the city encompassing the civilized as well as the debased part of it. The drawing room becomes the centre of action where all the action takes place. By merely naming a few relevant features and highlights of the city life, Ezekiel builds up a very vivid and effective urban scene. He is essentially a writer of the city life and the city he describes is Bombay. For him Bombay is the metaphor for urban life in India. Bombay is used as symbol to show Indian modernization and its complexities and challenges.

Ezekiel presents the reality of man and woman. The male has more opportunity than the female as she is bound by domestic chores and children. Here, Ezekiel displays the issue of gender discrimination which
allows a man like Naresh to flirt with other women. He is also connected with Mala, his wife, who loves him sincerely and proves to be more faithful. Ezekiel focuses on the fact that it is the male who is allowed to roam here and there, while the female is supposed to remain steady. She presents an image of a modern woman who loves her husband sincerely. Even after knowing the unfaithfulness of her husband she fulfils all her duties towards children and her husband. The reality of man-woman relationship is presented by Ezekiel in *Marriage Poem*.

Ezekiel made a genuine attempt to encompass as many Indian realities as possible. He displays how marital relationships are wrecked by extra-marital relations. He tries to depict very normal and natural condition within marriage and displays the man—woman relationship, their common expectations and the emptiness which arise due to unwanted and unauthentic relationship.

Mala: He never remembers to do anything I tell him.
Mrs. Lall: He has a bad memory........
Mala: He has a very good memory. He never forgets to do anything he wants to do.... he’s very efficient, except when he has to do something for me. *(Marriage Poem,63).*

Ezekiel very expertly deals with the realistic portrayal of society. As in *Nalini*, he shows, in the *Marriage Poem* the life of the married couple and brings us face to face with the ordinary condition.

Mala: I love it too.
Naresh: I hate it.
Mala: Don’t ask for it, then come on, sit down, have your tea.
Naresh: I don’t want it.
Marriage Poem: A Tragi-comedy

Mala: You never do anything to please me. *(Marriage Poem, 61).*

Ezekiel also portrays the reality of the fact that giving suggestions to others is simple but applying it to your own life is quite different. Mrs. Lall pacifies Mala by saying.

Mrs. Lall: Wives have to do things for their husbands. *(Marriage Poem, 64).*

She is giving suggestions to Mala to console her but when the things turn to her she behaves as a different person. Mrs. Lall gets worked up and collapses at the induced suggestion that her husband could be as unfaithful as Mala’s, her mask goes off. She gives a long speech on how to reform a husband. She comments,

Mrs. Lall: ... I would make a terrible fuss. I would harass my husband night and day till he gave her up. I wouldn’t eat and I wouldn’t allow him to eat. I wouldn’t sleep and I wouldn’t allow him to sleep. I would behave like a mad woman. I would tear my hair and I would tear his hair ..... *(Marriage Poem, 65).*

Mrs. Lall is giving suggestions to Mala but when asked by Mala,

Mala: What would you do if your husband became attached to another woman? *(Marriage Poem, 65).*

By presenting this situation, Ezekiel attempts to show the reality and thereby present a realistic picture of human behaviour. Ezekiel’s portrayal of another couple Malati and Ranjit, shows a different aspect of married life, that in spite of having a different temperament one can have a happy married life. Their conversation reveals their different attitude.
Ranjit: I agree with Mala
Malati: ...That leaves Naresh and I on the same side, doesn’t it? (Marriage Poem,73).

Throughout the play Ezekiel comments on different realities which in one way or the other affects human behaviour and life; how women suffer at the hands of man, and how an extra-marital affair can destroy the happiness of married life.

Ezekiel’s characters are vividly delineated. He emphasises those qualities of his characters which are needed for the development of the plot. Ezekiel follows the rule that every character should be so presented as to appear absolutely adequate to all the demands which the plot makes upon it. In the plays of Ezekiel characterization and plot are correlated and only those points of character are emphasised, which develop the plot. Ezekiel has ingenuously created close correspondence between character and situation. His characters reveal themselves through their own actions and words. Characters in the play are types. There are six characters in the play Mala and Naresh, husband wife, Malati and Ranjit another couple, Leela and Mrs. Lall; all the characters are real and near to life as they are presented in a realistic situation. Mala and Naresh are a contrast to Malati and Ranjit, Leela represents a different side of the woman, and Mrs. Lall expresses the mindset of the traditional housewife. Thus all the characters are a fusion of old and new, modern and traditional.

Mala is a fusion of traditional as well as modern woman. As a traditional woman she only wants her husband and children. Her traditional quality can be seen in behaviour. Like a typical housewife she likes to have tea
with her husband and want to share her evening tea with him. She also likes to wait for him. The whole world of her’s revolves around her husband. She even expects a word of appreciation from him. She says to Naresh,

Mala: you always distort everything I say. I like waiting for you because I want the pleasure of having tea with you in the evening so in the morning.... (Marriage Poem,60).

She cares for her husband and wants his affection and love in return. Her talk with Mrs. Lall shows that like a typical housewife she cares for her husband. Like a typical Hindu bride, she is emotional and has no interest other than her husband and children. Mala is aware of the extra-marital relationship of her husband; still she wants her husband back and loves him. In fact, she is left isolated, unsatisfied and unhappy due to her marriage. While talking to Ranjit and Malati, she reminds Naresh that he is married and has two children.

Mala: What’s all this talk about the single man, anyway?
You’re not single. You’re married, I must remind you, and we have two children. (Marriage Poem,74).

On the other hand Mala is modern too Like the new women she is practical and confident, she is not ready to lose her husband at any cost and, in the end, she wins her husband back due to her love and devotion towards him. She becomes synonymous with the modern woman. She talks with her husband about the coldness in love:

Mala: ....Talk to me. Come and sit beside me.
Naresh: I’m quite relaxed.
Mala: ... come and sit beside me.
Naresh: ...O, alright......
Mala: Can’t you come closer?
Naresh: ... I am close enough.
Mala: I’m your wife, you know. (*Marriage Poem, 62*).

She can boldly discuss with her husband about the coldness in love. She is frank in pointing out her husband’s weakness.

Mala establishes through the plot as a stronger character. She opposes her husband’s argument with him and gives him advice, but she is never seen to accept her life as it is. She has courage and will within her to change the situation and hopes to live a happy married life once again. She never feels herself defeated and faces every situation strongly and wins in the end. She is a practical woman and seeks advice from Mrs. Lall, an elderly woman about her husband. She is confident and not ready to give up. She says to Mrs Lall,

Mala: He’s my husband, and I love him.
Mrs. Lall: Accept him, then.
Mala: I won’t accept him running after other women.

(*Marriage Poem, 64*).

She can be described as a representative of contemporary Indian women in similar situations. She displays independence, bold attitude and self-assertiveness, but she is extremely sensitive to the traditional norms of morality, as she again and again reminds her husband of the marital duties and responsibility. She is tied down by the oppressive constraints of the label of Indians that is imposed on her by the self-styled guardians of social norms and cultural ideals even as she tries to live life on her own terms. Like a modern woman she can question her husband and remind her husband of his responsibility. She has done everything to save their
collapsing marriage. She is a mixture of both conventional as well as modern. In the end she wins her husband back by her devotion, deep love and strong persuasion.

Through his female protagonists Ezekiel seems to convey the message that marital polarizations curtail human potential and individual happiness. Mala’s identity (character) is highly assimilative, she can adopt and accommodate herself both to traditional Indian values and at the same time she is confident and strong like a modern woman.

In Naresh we find a characteristic of a modern as well as traditional husband. He is married to Mala but finds no happiness in their married life and relationship. For him marriage is just a tradition bound institution. He lives with his wife but adores Leela and enjoys the company of Malati. Instead of his wife Mala, he finds love and emotional support from Leela with whom he is in extra-marital relationship. He knows the reality that his wife loves him but is unable to come out from his dreamworld with Leela. Naresh’s explanation to Mala that “our temperaments are very different” is not cunning but serves as a camouflage to his inherent weakness. Naresh is also the sort of husband in whom we find a blend of tradition and modernity. He knows his responsibility towards his wife and children.

Naresh is caught in the crossfire of marital loyalty and romantic love. He is not strong enough to love completely either his wife or his girl friend, but with holds from both. He is unable to decide anything. He is shown to be a confused man, who is torn between marital relations and duties in which he is not happy, and the dream like notion of Leela with whom he feels
quite convinced and gets emotional support. He believes that “genes” are responsible for his extra-marital behaviour in his own words.

Mala: You could love me if you decide to.
Naresh: How can I decide to? These things are not decided by us.
Mala: By whom are they decided, then?
Naresh: By our genes.

Naresh: The genes are gods. (*Marriage Poem*, 71).

His modern outlook can be seen in his behaviour; he dislikes his wife’s habit of waiting for him. Naresh is conscious of his own weakness. He is no hard hearted villain but an erring human being.

Malati: The paradox of vice and virtue resembling each other.
Ranjit: Nobody says that.
Mala: For me, vice is vice and virtue is virtue. There can’t be any confusion between the two.
Naresh: In the space between the two, there is always confusion.

Malati: That leaves Naresh and I on the same side, doesn’t it? (*Marriage Poem*, 73).

Naresh finds marriage a bondage. He values the freedom of an individual more than his filial duties. Ezekiel attempts to present a man who is not able to decide between his marital duties and his own notion of love. The playwright shows that a modern man is not able to decide anything. He feels self contradiction within himself.

........in Marriage Poem, in spite of occasional indications that Naresh is partially responsible for the failure of marriage, he come across largely as a men who has made a disastrous marriage, the disaster of course being his wife mala. The other
women in the play are the self-righteous neighbour (Mrs. Lall), the gullible breathy romantic (Leela) and the flirtatious housewife (Malati). There is no ambiguity about the fact that Naresh is misunderstood and feels trapped, even crucified within the marriage.... (Pandey, 1990, 81).

There are other characters who is hybridization of old and new. Mrs. Lall, who is neighbour of Mala, is an interesting character in the play and from whom Mala takes advice. She is very genuine and sincere in her advice. She is a representative of typical Indian housewife. In her character we find characteristic of a typical Indian woman. Her conversation with Mala reveals this,

Mala: Why shouldn’t he post them for me? I do lots of things for him.
Mrs. Lall: Wives have to do things for their husbands.
(Marriage Poem, 64).

She is a woman capable of making “a terrible fuss” if her husband runs after other women. Also she is conventional in her views and ideas. Like a very sincere adviser she gives suggestion to Mala.

Mala: He’s my husband, and I love him.
Mrs. Lall: Accept him, then.
Mala: I won’t accept him running after other woman.
Mrs. Lall: All husbands do. (Marriage Poem, 64).

Malati and Ranjit is another couple who are well adjusted and provide a contrast to Mala and Naresh. They are portrayed to be a happy couple. Malati and Ranjit both think differently; they are different in their ideas but they are a happy married couple. Their relationship provides a good contrast to that of Mala and Naresh who are not happy with their married life. They are a couple who prove that married life is more a
comedy than tragedy. They display the better aspect of married life. They also show the reality that husbands and wife think differently, but they can be happy by appreciating each other.

Naresh: What is love without understanding?
Mala: It’s still love.
Naresh: We think differently.
Malati: Husband and wife always think differently.
Ranjit: That’s not true.
Malati: It’s not acknowledged. It’s not accepted. But it is true. *(Marriage Poem, 75).*

Malati and Ranjit both have different opinions yet they accommodate thought. The frustration of Mala and Naresh is contrasted with the mirthful spirit of Malati and Ranjit to reveal the fact that marriage is ‘more a comedy..... more a poem than a dirge......’ Ranjit and Malati a modern couple who know that they have their own ideas and views. They think differently yet they love each other and understand each other. Ranjit allows his wife Malati to favour Naresh, and through this way allows her to be free to put her perspective. Hence, Ezekiel attempts to present a character which is real and natural.

Leela, a woman with whom Naresh is having an extra-marital relation meets Naresh only once a week. She represents another characteristic of modern woman who is aware that the man with whom she is in relationship with, is married, yet she loves him and finds pleasure in relationship with him. The fact that Naresh is a married man never upsets her. She is ready to share her love with Mala.
Naresh who is unmoved by the kisses and caresses of his wife gets electrified in Leela’s mere presence and transforms into a passionate lover. Leela finds absolute gratification with Naresh.

Leela: .....I’m happy when I’m with you I’m happy to be loved by you.
Naresh: Is that enough?
Leela: It’s a lot...........(Marriage Poem,69).

Leela, real or fanciful, gives form to the romantic dreams of Naresh. She represents a free-willed woman who is not bound by any responsibility and marital duties.

As a dramatic craftsman, Ezekiel evolves a dramatic technique which is so flexible that it changes according to the requirement of his plots. Plot is very essential for drama. It is that framework of incidents, however, simple and complex upon which drama is constructed. The events and incidents are organised into an artistic whole, with a view of creating unity of impression of effect.

Marriage Poem is a tragi-comedy. It explores the life of a married couple and their disharmonious relationship. Ezekiel introduces tension and conflict, which are essential for plot, in the very beginning and all events and actions of characters intensify conflict until it reaches climax and resolves into denouement. The plot of Marriage Poem is simple. It is a one act tragic comedy which is based on the theme of marriage. The setting of the play is the drawing room where all the action takes place. This setting is a reflection of the mood of the characters. The scene of action is “a drab, middle-class drawing dining room” with “a mixture of modern and old fashioned” furniture. There are no curtains, no carpets
and no flowers. Book cases, unclear dining table, papers, files and books strewn on the writing desk give an effect of untidiness ‘flat, thin lighting from overhead bulbs and ‘the large painting heavily overlaid with dust” all focus on the absence of colour or happiness in the life of the occupants of the house. Their disharmony and disturbed state of mind is reflected by the “untidy” room. The presence of children is shown by the toys which are thrown on a small mat and in the end the presence of children is reflected by “A loud childish persistent knocking at the door” The final reconciliation is suggested when light moves from the couple to the mat on which the toys are thrown. The atmosphere is urban and all the characters are modern, setting for the action is a metropolitan city. Ezekiel’s portrayal of this simple theme ‘marriage’ in the new context makes it fall close to the normal life of the common human being.

The play begins with non-violent domestic lively conversation. Ezekiel presents a language which is normal to human life. His English is lucid and simple and he has successfully moulded it to express typical Indian ethos. He employs a device like wit, humour, and irony to make the language more effective. The domestic lively conversation is shown in starting between the Mala and Naresh. He uses simple and clear language which is both suggestive and revealing.

The conversation between Mala and Naresh is joined by Mrs. Lall. Just to present the extra-marital adventure of Naresh.

Ezekiel’s characters use language which suits their status and temperament. The whole play is based on the situation which is domestic and lively. Ezekiel displays how foolishly people behave in this situation
and make themselves a laughing stock. The sarcasm will be more evident when the play is enacted on the stage by reading the comic spirit does not get proper justification and recipients fail to reach the exact meaning of a work of art.

In linguistic gestures, Ezekiel gives ample direction for body language and pace. In the beginning, Mala tries to cover her disappointment and this feeling of Mala is portrayed not by language but by gestures as she expresses “eating slices of bread which she dips into her cup of tea”. She is in a mood of despair and twists her face but just to hide her feeling she smiles to look normal, and suddenly she ‘picks up a magazine’ and ‘flips over its pages nervously’ just to relax herself from mental tension. These all are gestures which are presented to express the feelings of Mala.

The use of directions for actors to perform a particular scene establishes Ezekiel as a stage friendly playwright who keeps in mind the limitations of the performatory art form. We find Mrs. Lall who comes to give suggestion to Mala, but when she has to give answer of the hypothetical question of Mala Mrs. Lall transforms completely and her gesture proves this: ‘She stands up briskly, utters half the words below standing, the rest walking up and down’ and at the end ‘She sinks into a sofa in a state of collapse, breathing heavily’ (Marriage Poem, 65).

All these gestures are more significant in comparison to the language of Mrs. Lall. They help in bringing out the feeling of Mrs. Lall more powerfully. The gesture of Mrs. Lall focuses on her disturbed state of mind. Hence, the gestures are powerful and more revealing than the words.
Ezekiel also concentrates on the fact that the suggestion of Mrs. Lall is full of humour and there is a note of farce in her suggestion. The dialogue which is used by the playwright is effective and convincing. Naresh who is caught between dream and reality, flirts with Malati, and speaks poetically in her presence. Ezekiel employs the poetical language intentionally to make his play more effective. Naresh talks poetically in the presence of Malati. This near poetry prose of Naresh makes the play more effective, and makes dialogue look more convincing and interesting. The language of the play is also symbolic. In the beginning the setting of the room is presented which signifies the unhappiness in the house and the disturbed psyche of the dwellers. The mat on which toys are scattered shows the presence of children in the house. Children are the only saving grace and agents of mutual peace, love and harmony. In the end the knock at the door suggests their possible reunion and awakening of their parental duty to children.

The dialogues in the play are witty and interesting. And sometimes they are full of humour, irony and comedy. The statements of Mrs. Lall arouse comedy to make it more powerful Ezekiel employs music on the stage “spectacular music, military or similar to parody the aggressive speech just made” Mrs. Lall is full of humour she says,

Mrs. Lall: ........I’ll write to all the papers. I’ll complain to the Home Minister. What is the use of being Home Minister, if he can’t guarantee the sanctity of the home?” (Marriage Poem,65).

Ezekiel uses words or ideas in an amusing and very imaginative way. Thus the whole play proves to be full of wit and humour. Ezekiel employs irony throughout his play Marriage Poem. The title ‘Marriage Poem’ suggests
the happy side of the marriage, in which two people live together happily and peacefully, but in this play Mala and Naresh, a married couple who quarrel with each other and have a disharmonious married life. They are leading a life full of conflicts. Ezekiel mocks at the institution of marriage in which there is no real happiness and no mutual understanding. There are many instances in the play where irony is employed as a conscious dramatic device. Mala states:

Mala: .......He is happy with me but he does not know it.......  
(Marriage Poem,66).

In reality Naresh does not care for Mala, he only comments and quarrels with her. Another instance which is more ironical is the remark by Mala that she knows Naresh more than Naresh. In reply to this Naresh says,

Naresh: It’s sad that you should say so. Men run away from women who know them too well. (Marriage Poem,79).

Ezekiel also employs aphoristic statement in the play to suggest the general truth and the play is marked with ‘verbal action’ and situational wit.

Only his wife knows a man. (Marriage Poem,74).

The genes are gods. (Marriage Poem,71).

Gods don’t kiss. (Marriage Poem,71).

Husband and wife always think differently. (Marriage Poem,75).

Every woman is an understanding woman except your wife. (Marriage Poem,77).
Ezekiel chooses appropriate words, suitable diction from a rich treasure of vocabulary. His words are suggestive, symbolic and reveal both character and situation. He writes dialogues in lucid, pointed and precise language which is conspicuous for flexibility. It changes with the nuances of his characters. His dialogues are crisp, precise, pointed and full of dramatic verse. As Vrinda Nabar comments:

"..........to me *Marriage Poem* is more representational and therefore more satisfying as theatre. Marriage poem is not an “ambitious” play. Its theme and treatment are in the mode of conventional theatre. These are defining statements not negative comments .....there is no deliberate avant gardeism, just as there is no fake existentialism, sense of alienation, etc. Nor is there any strenuous attempt to “modernize” the technique, which remains that of conventional theatre for the most part.............. (Pandey,1990,760).

In Ezekiel’s play we find the atmosphere to be totally modern, as in *Marriage Poem* the setting is the drawing room where all the action takes place. This setting helps the playwright to bring forward ordinary reality. In *Marriage Poem* it is the married space of an urban middle class family. By making this space a central place Ezekiel attempts to make English language more convenient to the reader or audience by making the drawing room the central space for the activities. Ezekiel establishes an unconventional approach as commented by Tabish Khair:

*Once again; Ezekiel’s feeling for language – the indeterminacies, sullenness and brokenness of a limping marriage – is fully in evidence. And once again, the drawing room is a space of limitations and possibilities, which provides restrained access to other spaces. The neighbours walk in, the children are playing outside; the husband is having an affair elsewhere. (Anklesaria,2008,546).*
Ezekiel’s skill and craftsmanship in making use of sound effects are evident in the play *Marriage Poem*. Music plays an important role in all the plays of Ezekiel; it becomes slow sometimes and louder in other situations to match the mood of the character and the action. The use of music can be effectively seen throughout the play. It becomes the effective weapon on the stage to express vacuum and silence experienced by the characters within themselves. It helps in expressing the mood of the characters and one can easily note shifts of the seriousness and non-seriousness of the situation and mood. Music excites the curiosity of the audience. The play begins with the “Pre-Curtain music” and this continues till the end of the play. In the background music can be heard softly at the time when the dialogue goes on, and at every pause the music breaks out loudly.

*The music starts again and never stops till near the end of the play being heard softly in the background when the dialogue is going on and breaking out loudly at every pause.... (Pandey, 1990, 76).*

The skirmishes between the couple are nicely intonated by the music. The use of music is fully exhibited in the final scene when Naresh is shown to submit himself to his wife, at this time music stops abruptly. And the long silence is filled by the children’s knock at the door and in the play growing forcefulness expressed by the musical crescendo hence; music plays an important role in the *Marriage Poem*. Music provides an intended metaphor to the idea of marriage as a poem with a constant rise and fall in the harmony and tone.

Another theatrical device which is employed by the playwright is electric light on the stage. Lights get dim and brighten according to the situation
and need of the plot. Light is a modern theatrical device to enhance meaning and interest of the text.

(Mala gets up in a huff and leaves the room. Music louder. Lights dim quickly, brighten slowly to reveal Leela....) (Marriage Poem,67).

At another point the use of light can be felt.

(He sinks down on his knees, lowers his head gently towards her lap. She slips out from under him and disappears as the lights dim and the music increases in volume. When the lights brighten again, Naresh is at his desk, waiting. Music continues for a bit before it subsides and Mala returns....) (Marriage Poem,67).

In the end Ezekiel fully exploits the use of light. As in the end we can see.

........Music louder, much louder, than at any previous time in the play. Lights out, except for a murky spotlight on the couple, which shifts slowly to the mat on which the toys are spread. Here, the spotlight becomes sharp and clear, defining the quantity and richness of the toys. Music attains crescendo. Then the spotlight goes off, and immediately the stage is lit as before, somewhat more brightly than before, as if the air has been washed clean.... (Marriage Poem,79).

Thus, the light becomes one of the effective theatrical devices due to which the action of play appears more powerful and involves the audience.

The end of the play appears to be “theatrical’. Mala is happy for the first time in the play when Naresh makes love to her. At that point the play could have ended well. But the reappearance of Leela, expresses that Naresh’s reconciliation with Mala is incomplete. Naresh is surprised to
find Leela again before him. But the final reunion of Naresh with Mala takes place due to the reappearance of Leela and her awakening to the children’s knock at the door; the existence of the children bring Naresh back to actual physical and social reality and responsibility.

Plot, characters, setting, style and language contribute to create the unity of effect and impression in *Marriage Poem*. They also reveal the dramatist’s view of life which is the search of identity in the midst of modern world’s challenges and growing complexities and demands.

The main thrust of Ezekiel’s search was not to revive tradition, but to understand and assimilate it for creative use namely to express the contemporary human situation and its varied manifestations. Thus through the encounter with tradition the contours of fresh, innovative and flexible dramatic forms Ezekiel has skilfully and meaningfully transacted a vision of Indian modernity. Among the rapid global scenario Indian traditional family systems and social patterns are struggling hard to establish their revived apprehension in the modern world.
Marriage Poem: A Tragi-comedy

REFERENCES


CHAPTER IV

*Song of Deprivation*: Comic Morality for the Non-existing Underground Theatre in India
*Song of Deprivation* is the fourth play by Ezekiel. It is a comic morality in one Act for the non-existent underground theatre in India. It involves phone conversation between two characters and it describes the plight of the modern man who is deprived of privacy in life. The play concentrates on the hollowness of middle-class life in cities. Ezekiel portrays two ultramodern and sexually oriented lovers He and She who are unable to meet in real life, choose to make love on telephone. The play exposes the hypocrisy and inhibitive nature of contemporary Indian society. Regarding the play Fritz Blackwell remarks:

> The fourth play, *Song of Deprivation*, reveals contemporary hollowness no less than the other three, although with less of the dramatic rapidity and lightness of touch which makes the other three so effective. It involves the same use of repetition, of triteness, and of cliche, but perhaps in too unstructured a manner (It must be most difficult to dramatically structure a phone conversation of such length) and falls apart at the length with a suddenly out of character (for both the girl and the play) idealistic speech by the female and the attempt to use the audience as a theatrical device.......... (Blackwell, 1976,265).

The plot of the play is simple. The play deals with only one action and produces maximum effects. The play is very short but like the traditional plays has a beginning, middle and an end. All the incident and events are arranged logically and the end appears to be convincing for the spectator.
The plot is nothing except how each one waits for the privacy, for enjoying each other and how partially it is fulfilled. The whole play is a telephonic conversation; characters never confront or meet each other. The playwright chooses a single situation and a single incident due to which it has a single interesting episode. The play is short and the action takes place within the short period of time. The plot of the play can be divided into four stages: the exposition, which is the introduction in which the situation, important characters and the things are explained to the audience. Next, is the conflict, in which the struggle between two forces is shown. The climax can be noted as a turning point, and finally the denouement where the action of the drama concludes.

The title of the play is very appropriate and suggestive. SHE and HE both have a deep feeling to meet each other and She is shown to be deprived of the freedom which she is not able to get from her childhood. Deprivation means one does not have or is prevented from having something that one deserves to have. She list all the things in her dialogue from which she has been prevented throughout her life, and now, she wants the freedom. HE and SHE both are deprived of each other and they desperately wish to meet each other, but are unable to meet in reality due to the restrictions put up by the society which becomes a hindrance in their way. Thus the title appears to be comic. The setting is two colourful rooms which are brought together by the wall as described in the play. The rooms are shown to be brightly lit. One can find out non-realistic items like table, chair and telephone which are of fantastic colour. The front section of the dividing wall is of some transparent material with a modern gadget. On the right side of the wall there is a huge old fashioned grandfather’s clock, and on the left there is
the collage of modern and pseudo modern images: Air India calendar, cheap bazaar prints of Hindu goddesses, glamorous fashion photographs from Indian women’s magazines, etc. At the end of the wall there is a pot of burning coals, and above the table and chair there are mobiles in both the rooms. One can clearly hear the light popular rhythmic music which gives the idea about the transistor and the ringing of bell of the telephone. Before starting the play, the playwright presents before the audience a clear idea through his setting, devices, atmosphere and music which shows the lifestyle of the character and the society.

Ezekiel portrays the life of these characters to be colourful as seen through the setting. The table, chair and telephone which are non-realistic and presented to be in extravagant shape and colour shows the nature of the occupants of the house. In She’s house there is a huge old fashioned grandfather’s clock which makes her conscious of time and reminds her of old-fashioned time or society from which she wants to escape. The setting reflects the fragmented psyche of the modern man. How a modern man’s life is torn into fragments and how he wants to gather all the pieces together and satisfy himself. The developing science and technology affects the life of modern man. On the one hand he is bound by traditional culture and religion which is shown by the prints of Hindu goddesses. On the other hand the modern world lures them and they have urge within them to associate themselves with modern and fashionable India. It is represented through fashion photographs from Indian women’s magazine and displays how a modern man is more drawn towards the glamorous fashion world.
The play is a mixture of tradition and modernity. In an interview with Anees Jung, Ezekiel says:

..........The problems of Indian writers are strange. They have to make a synthesis between the ancient and modern cultures.... (Rohtgi,www.ssmrae.com).

It is a modern play as it contains all the elements which reflect modernity. At its center there is cry of ‘liberty, fraternity and equality’ and rejection of past as SHE wants to refashion the world in her own image. She wants the freedom from which she was deprived from her childhood due to the patriarchal influence and gender inequality. She was not allowed to do many things. She says;


The play rejects tradition and convention and searches for new means of expression. It is simply a break from traditional values and rejects the conventional ideologies. Modernity is usually associated with civilization, and we can also see the effects of British civilization on the characters’ daily lives and ways of thinking. At the same time, the play is traditional and as tradition in itself is a burden, oppression is represented by the grandmother of She. The grandmother stands for the age old connections of the traditional Indian life and becomes an obstacle in She’s path. She is conscious:

SHE: ........ I'll have to change I can’t remain in this bikini any longer. My grandmother will be back by lunch time. She’ll be shocked to see me like this. I must change. (Anklesaria,2008,168).
As the tradition is a ‘dead weight, a stone that crushes us into dust’ and tradition does not allow freedom and obstacle to both something new and change and full of prohibitions, it is ‘Surrender to the past, a betrayal of the present’. Ezekiel shows the affect of dead burden on modern Indian society through the character of She.

SHE: ........ How can such people ever create anything. How can they understand anything. They’re dead, dead, dead. (Anklesaria, 2008, 171).

Traditional theatre has a close relationship with modern theatre. The use of the element of social criticism is one trait of traditional drama. Thus Ezekiel employs traditional conventions and technique to bring contemporary ideas and themes into focus. Ezekiel deals with the common man’s life, dilemmas, environment, surroundings, daily business of living, irritations, anger, enjoyment, frustrations, loneliness etc.

The theory of post-colonial criticisms suits the play as She is leading a double life. She is divided into two: for the society She is a different person and for herself She is different. At the same time she plays two roles: This concept of double identity makes her a post colonial subject. Due to the effect of colonization the psyche of man and woman changes and dual identity emerges as a result of colonizer and colonized interaction. Thus this ‘emphasis on identity as double or hybrid or unstable’ is a characteristic of the post colonial approach. As the appearance of She shows,

SHE: ....She returns, dressed in a sari, wearing slippers, looking very respectable..... (Anklesaria, 2008, 169).

Further,
The conversation between She and He reflects how She is forced to live a
dual life. She is forced by the society to wear a mask of pretence and
unreality; She wants the freedom and wants to come out of traditional
bound ideologies of the society. The play thus depicts the predicament of
a post-colonial subject who has to find her own answers and make her
own decisions.

The psychoanalytical theory of Freud may be applied to the character of
She. She has an unadmitted desire within her which she wants to fulfill.
She has a hidden wish which she was not allowed to fulfill in her
childhood. She was deprived of many things as she admits:

SHE: Not allowed to read certain books. Not allowed to
see certain films. Not allowed to mix freely with boys.
Not encouraged to make friends outside the
community. Where are you going? When will you be
back? Don’t be late -----------------the muttering of long
prayers without knowing their meaning, the hostility to
everything new or different, without giving it a chance...... (Anklesaria,2008,171).

Thus from childhood She is restricted from having many things and her past experience forces her to act in a particular manner and this desire to get freedom and a living make her do particular actions. Through her long speech she listens the entire thing from which she was deprived from her childhood. She has one more wish to meet her lover whom she has not been able to meet for a long time and finally in the end She tears the thin transparent screen and sits in the lap of her lover. As Freud says:

......When some wish, fear, memory, or desire is difficult to face we may try to cope with it by repressing it. That is, eliminating it from the conscious mind. But this doesn’t make it go away. It remains in the unconscious...... (Barry,2007,100).

The feeling of fear also exists within She and He .They both have the fear of society due to which they are separated from each other and it is this fear of society which restricts the freedom of She. He is conscious of the society which always remains there.

SHE: I want them to leave me alone. I leave them alone, don’t. I?


This fear remains in her mind and she is conscious of it but later on in the play she comes out of her feeling of fear and ignores the society. Thus Freud’s psycho analytical criticism works throughout the play. The writers own consciousness about his observation and conventional thoughts and ideas of India make him to adapt satiric and critical attitude towards the conventional behavior, religion, and ceremonies. All his observations get
reflected in his writing and through the long speech of She the playwright brings his own criticism in the traditional ways of Indian lifestyle.

In the previous time the Indian women is considered as an inferior object, and woman has to fight her own battle for establishing her existence and individuality. They are brought up in a male dominated social structure which teaches superiority of male over her and woman has to fight her own battle through the harsh realities of her existence and from the burden of traditional customs and values. In the Indian culture from the conventional time women are marginalized by the society. The speech of She reflects,

SHE: ......All that suppression and repression...... No sympathy in adolescence. No freedom as a college student. Not allowed to read certain books. Not allowed to see certain films. Not allowed to mix freely with boys...... (Anklesaria,2008,170).

She is aware of the inequality between He and herself She knows how man has freedom but women are still restricted from many practicing things. As She says,

SHE: It’s easy for you to talk. You’re free. I’m not free.

Woman in Indian society is acceptable when she obeys the patterns of society which are set from the conventional time and any new change in her identity is unacceptable. She is acceptable when she becomes a social creature after wearing the sari but is unacceptable in a bikini. Ezekiel shows through the character of She a modern woman who wants to cross
all the limitations set by the society. She has individuality and a taste for freedom and social equality.

The events and situations of the play are read as emblems of the construction of gender identity as from childhood. She faces discrimination and inequality. She is forced to accept suppression and repression. The playwright focuses on the theme gender inequality in Indian society where men and women have different types of upbringing.

Ezekiel has a sense of reality which makes him look at life objectively. Ezekiel could neither think of India’s ancient past nor of the whole of India does including rural areas playwright depict the life of the metropolitan city with its glamour in a realistic manner. He criticizes the rituals and injustice that we all counter in day to day life Ezekiel mocks at the rituals of the society that are performed mechanically and seems to disapprove of the ways of the contemporary society. The playwright looks with fresh eyes at the society and environment and portrays an authentic and realistic picture of Indian life. Ezekiel presents before us the reality of modern urban youth.

The playwright draws our attention to the negative impacts of industrialization, urbanization and mechanization on the human value system which is degraded due to the rapid changes in our society. Tensions and conflicts result from mindless westernization and make man a dehumanized victim. The playwright also criticizes modern scientific inventions. In his play he regards gifts of civilization such as radio, cinema and mobiles to be casting a corrupting influence on people. In his play Ezekiel shows how modern urban gadget holds an important place in the life of modern man. The process of modernization which includes
urbanization, industrialization, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication like televisions, radio, newspaper, national and international transportation all affect the life of the human being. The play deals with the lives of urban men as Ezekiel himself is both urban and modern and brought up in the metropolitan city. The characters are placed in an urban atmosphere. Ezekiel in his plays attempts to balance diverse tensions of urban culture. The city plays a vital role in his life as well as in his plays.

Ezekiel satirizes Indian youth who believes in the imaginative world far from reality. They are interested in the physical side of love. In the play the playwright comments on the hawkers who have a habit of knocking at the door of the people and through this common idea he brings his audience near to the Indian reality and common day life.

HE : Knocking at the door at this hour to sell eggs

Ezekiel’s plays deal with the human lives which are stagnated in the mire of personal frustration, sexual innuendoes and exposes the essential artificiality of the society. After independence there were many changes, both political and social, in the Indian society. Ezekiel also satirizes the concept of modernism; he tries to create a picture of a man who wants to run away from the city’s turmoil. He focuses our attention on the changing face of modern India due to the result of the two world wars, industrial development and impact of science. The world of modern man is complex and has multidimensional fact, in which all long for freedom; there is an urge for a sense of belonging.
It is modernism which stresses on freedom of expression, experimentation, radicalism and even anthropological primitivism and as such brings a change in the attitude, ideas and beliefs of people. Drastic urbanization, science and technological advancement are the forces behind this rapid change. As a result a new society is introduced in India where habits and outlook undergo tremendous change which creates a new problem in the modern society. Ezekiel comments on the concept of modernity which can create trouble if in excess. It will be apt to write what Jai Singh Hari says:

...... A rich tradition can well be an integral part of modernity. Both can co-exist and supplement each other. It is a matter of adjustment Modernization can be adopted to an extent desirable, depending on the need and receptivity of a society..... (Hari,1989,33).

She is a representative of modern young lover, leading a dual life which is reflected through her dress; firstly bikini and then the sari. Ezekiel brings before us the clear image of the modern woman who has emerged with her own desires, ambitions and quests to break away age old concepts, beliefs and customs which have tied her to the four walls forcing her to devalue herself. But in the process of their fight against the repressive forces of tradition and prescriptive roles based on idealized models of a bygone era and their desire for newer wider horizons some of them live a dual existence, feel confused, angry and reactive, as She is seen living a dual life:

I have to pretend all the time (Anklesaria,2008,170).

Ezekiel criticizes at the traditional ways of life and speaks through the mouth of She where She shows the dos and don’ts which are forced on
her in the childhood. In previous time the daughters are shown undergoing conflicts because of the parents’ expectations from their daughters to live by the traditional value system of India; with a cultural baggage which they try to impose on their children through their own festivals, food, songs, dress, stories etc. She comments:

SHE: ....... Terrible how can anyone live like that, as if inside a cage, how can they. Its absolutely sterile. They bring up their children exactly as they were brought up. They arrange marriages for them, and want them to bring up their children exactly as they were brought up....... (Anklesaria, 2008, 171).

With regard to the state of women, Girish Karnad in one of the interview says,

In our homes, women folk speak a lot when they serve food. They have a freedom to speak only in the kitchen and in the bedroom. The reason probably is they give food and sex. It is only there that a man sits and receives while the woman gives. (Prasad, 2003, 85).

Ezekiel portrays ordinariness of things and events, and discovery of self. Alienation is another main aspect of the life of modern man. The life of modern man in spoiled by secularism, science and technology. There are many factors which cause alienation; culture and social environment which are responsible for the isolation of a person. In ‘Song of Deprivation’ dress reoccurs the means of alienation as She changes her dress from bikini to sari and becomes a different woman in the eyes of society.

Here social means that the woman can now be acceptable in our society in this way, and in bikini she is ostracized. Thus, to fit in the mainstream
of society one has to follow the patterns and ways of the society. Another factor which is responsible for the isolation is the influence of our upbringing and nature. Through his plays Ezekiel suggests that there is something offensive in our nature and upbringing which affects the mindset of the human being and creates a feeling of alienation. The effects of our upbringing and nature can be predicted through the long speech of She in which she describes how she is isolated from having so many things She dislikes the conventional ways:

SHE: It’s a kind of miracle, isn’t it? I mean, how I escaped. All that suppression and repression. Half a dozen voices saying no to me from the time I was a child. No childishness permitted to me when I was a child. Don’t do this, don’t do that. You’ll fall, you’ll hurt yourself. No sympathy in adolescence. No freedom as a college student. Not allowed to read certain books. Not allowed to see certain films. Not allowed to mix freely with boys. Not encouraged to make friends outside the community. Where are you going? When will you be back? Don’t be late. Suspicion and distrust from the beginning. Resentment of spontaneity. Hatred of everything modern. Fear of Fashion. Awful imagine listening to endless talk about money and property and food—yea, endless talk about food. The mutton today is very good. The mutton yesterday was not so good. It tastes better when it’s hot, doesn’t it, have some more, very special masala this, wants a potato, take this chapati, its got more ghee on it, this cabbage is excellent, I love cabbage-endlessly, endless. How I hate it. I always hated it. The atmosphere of gossip and petty-mindedness, the total indifference to ideas, the soulless routine of religious ceremonies without an iota of religion-conviction, the muttering of long prayers without knowing their meaning, the hostility to everything
new or different, without giving it a chance. Terrible. How can anyone live like that, as if inside a cage, how can they. It’s absolutely sterile. They bring up their children exactly as they were brought up. They arrange marriages for them, and want them to bring up their children exactly as they were brought up. It’s shameful! It’s nauseating! How can such people ever create anything. How can they understand anything. They’re dead, dead, dead........... (Anklesaria,2008,171).

Ezekiel himself has experienced alienation due to his Jewish ancestry. Ezekiel has no classic background as Jews were spread all over the world. The playwright could not relate himself to the Indian history nor to the land of origin of his religion. Ezekiel had no past tradition and knowledge about the life in the villages of India. Thus, he was alienated from the conventional Indian society by his religion and upbringing. Like his characters, Ezekiel also feels alienated.

.........The attitude of Ezekiel is that of a highly educated, cultured and polished man not belonging to any extreme of society. He is a part of the social milieu but yet he feels alienated he is not able to enjoy the mannerisms. The jokes and the topics of conversation of the people around him. Neither does he share their hollow religious beliefs and constant display of their culture such an attitude is conducive to the development of an ironic attitude.............. (Sharma,1995,109).

She suffers from the identity crisis and has to pretend all the time. She is forced by the society to lead a dual life. Ezekiel's own background provides the consciousness for the issue of identity crises.

......... He relates himself to modern India in a certain way because not being a Hindu, he can neither identity himself
Ezekiel is a modern playwright as he deals with current subjects and immediate surroundings. His plays are based in Bombay and its rootlessness, dehumanization of modern life or with the environment of social estrangement. The theme of hollowness and emptiness runs throughout the play ‘

\textit{Song of Deprivation}’. The character of He and She are portrayed as young lovers and through them Ezekiel points out the futility of the youth who are empty from within and have no real values within them. They live in their own imaginative world and hesitate to face the society. They want to live in the world of their own fantasy without any outside interruption. Their emptiness can be predicted through the dialogue of He, as he is merely interested in physical love.

\textbf{HE} : If we can’t close the door, what’s the use? (Anklesaria, 2008, 161).

Thematically, Ezekiel’s plays range from alienation of the modern individual, social individual tensions to the complexities of human character, through which he exposes the theme of man’s existential loneliness. The emptiness of these characters can be traced as they are pretending all the time and leading a double life.

Ezekiel presents characters that are really peculiar, as they do not have names. They are only two colourless characters, He and She. It is a one act play and the playwright has introduced limited characters. For enhancing the effect of the play Ezekiel goes back to the traditional theatre and shows the prominence of the actors in order to put forth his ideas. The playwright has given She a very different role that of a
traditional woman, and once again he succeeds in depicting the status of a woman and her influence in present day society. He portrays changing images, positions, awareness level and attitudes of Indian women. It is important to note that Ezekiel makes these characters nameless to avoid the caste nation and race. They do not belong to any particular caste, nation or religion; they are only representatives of lovers. It all shows that love needs nothing except a man and woman. Ezekiel made his characters universal by making them nameless and colourless. It can be aptly quoted in this context:

> The nameless, casteless, raceless characters are a representation of lovers, for love transgresses all these barriers. They may be Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Jew, Zoroastrian or Buddhist. They may be your mother or my daughter, the playwright’s son or anybody’s son they may be Indian or British, American or Russian........ (Sharma, 1995,147).

Ezekiel represents how society acts as a hindrance between the lovers as He and She, the young lovers who want to consummate their love. They are unable to meet in reality and the society becomes an obstruction in their path. Ezekiel presents that young modern lovers are cunning and wisely they can overcome the hindrance in their path. There are three hindrances which are represented in the play, and they luckily deal with them, the grandmother of She who has gone to town which provides the lovers’ freedom, the servants but they are ready to bribe them for leaving them alone and the last is the eggman who is not allowed in by them. Both the lovers want to be alone. They indulge in love play after getting isolated from everyone. Their conversation is dirty and focuses on the fact that they are slaves to their senses.

HE: I lick the perspiration off your body particularly the places where it is thickest. (Anklesaria, 2008, 163).

They also reveal their past sensational experience where She reminds him of their train journey, and her leaning on him in a crowded train:

SHE: From time to time, as you swayed in the moving train, you pressed against me............ (Anklesaria, 2008, 165).

The characters, He and She are of same taste and sentiment as they dance and enjoy together to the light, popular rhythmic volume of the music. Ezekiel displays through the character of She that, in the changing socio-economic scenario educated Indian women are no longer ready to tolerate any kind of exploitation. They are conscious of their demands and struggle for the fulfillment of these demands. Ezekiel mocks at the double standard of the life of She. She leads a double life, has double standards and even the double tongue for her and other for the society. She pretends all the time. She looks romantic as long as she wears bikini but after wearing the sari she becomes a social creature. Through her character the playwright laughs at the double standards of the people.

Towards the end of the play She delivers a long dialogue which reveals the criticism of modern life, that how girls are brought up in India and they are devoid of freedom. For them the world is like a prison house where they cannot have freedom to lead their life in their own way. She has the insatiable thirst for living and life as she said,

SHE: Without freedom, how can I live! Unless I live how can I find out what living is?
HE: ......You want freedom and that’s what people are afraid of, aren’t they? One freedom leads to another, and it all leads up to sexual freedom, doesn’t it? (Anklesaria, 2008, 171).

The conversations between He and She are very meaningful and seem logical and interesting. The playwright depicts the fact that in the play the individual cannot avoid society, and one cannot escape from the clutches of society. SHE is ready to leave them, but they are not ready to leave her alone. Ezekiel’s characters work as his mouthpiece as they pronounce the playwright’s point of view in a distinctive manner. Ezekiel laughs at the character and through them, at the hypocrisy of the world. Though there is not much action in the play yet the long speech and dialogue grasp our attention. However at the end She and He are together and they are not bothered about the society.

The gadgets like telephone and the radio and the machines are the medium through which the playwright displays the artificiality of the modern man’s existence. It is merely a reflection of modern life and how the lovers’ life is incomplete without these two, which appear to be the helpers of the lovers.

The play focuses on the fact that the life of modern man becomes a question, the conversation, between He and She are in the form of question most of the time. In the present society life is like an interrogation mark. Man is always in search of an answer:

HE: If we can’t close the door, what’s the use? (Anklesaria, 2008, 161).

SHE: Has the audience left? (Anklesaria, 2008, 173).


The title of the play is suggestive of the theme of deprivation. It reflects how He and She are prevented from having things that they long for. She lists the dos and the don’ts.

Ezekiel brings forward the stark realities of life, that sometimes this dos and don’ts are better for a decent society. He attacks the social customs, religion, religious practices, giving undue importance to food, the lifestyle of elders who treat their children and bring them up in the same way.

She is a representative of the modern woman Ezekiel tries to transform this image of woman by portraying her in a more realistic manner. Through She’s character; he depicts a bold woman of the middle class society. She is a representative of the contemporary Indian women. She displays independence, self-assertiveness and skepticism but She is also extremely sensitive to the traditional norms of morality. When She appears on the stage, dressed in a bikini, she is without makeup, long loose hair, barefooted. She is playing a transistor and listening to music and she receives the call of her lover. Throughout the play, She is presented in a restless mood, as if she is dissatisfied and wants to do something else. The gesture of She displays her state of mind as she keeps on moving her hands and feet and changes position. She drags the telephone wire. This all explains the excitement and restlessness of She.

She fidgets about, shifts from foot to foot, kicks up her legs, moves all over the room drags the lengthy telephone wire.
She is presented to be as a modern young lover who is unable to meet in reality and makes love on telephone. She has a restlessness to meet He. They waste their time in imagining and pretending. The character of She is a blend of both tradition and modernity. As a modern woman she voice her feelings and experiences freely but at the sometime remains confined of the traditions and connections of her society. She is a modern woman, strongly aware of her rights, individualistic in outlook but also constrained by the forces of tradition which chain and holds her back. The playwright displays how the society becomes the obstruction in the lovers’ life and encroaches upon their privacy. She’s grandmother, the servants and the eggman are the representatives of the society.

The playwright presents that modern youth is more influenced by the sexual side of love. Love for them is something else as the dialogues of She represent.

**SHE:** I’m alone with my dog. (Anklesaria, 2008, 159).

**HE:** If I come over, will you let me close the door?

(Anklesaria, 2008, 161).

She has a double personality, one for her own self and the other for the society. Here Ezekiel brings to our mind the idea of identity crisis which occurs in the mind of the Indian youth and the unauthentic life of man who has no real worth. She is presented in the bikini which she wears after her grandmother leaves for town while She is alone in the house. This reflects that it is the boundation of the society which forces a woman to pretend all the time. The character of She is ultramodern, as She loves
to wear bikini, enjoys music and talks confidently on sex with He. She says,

SHE: I’m beautifully dirty......
SHE: You undress me.....

She is not like traditional women who have certain boundations. She has a modern outlook and ideas. She says:

SHE: I’m lying down naked, well, almost, and I’m not bathed in perspiration but imagine that I am. Go on. Don’t you undress? (Anklesaria,2008,162).

The play can also be seen as deconstructing idealized images of the Indian woman. There is no ideal Indian woman as such, apart from the real flesh and blood women. She also reminds He about their last experience in the train:

SHE : Remember last week in the train?  
SHE : From time to time, as you swayed in the moving train, you pressed against me. (Anklesaria, 2008,164).

Through the character of She the playwright shows the fascination of modern youth for the phone as well as for music, as She again and again switches on the transistor which is with her all the time:

HE: You spend too much time listening to that transistor.  
HE: What have you been doing all morning? 
SHE: ....Listening to the transistor. (Anklesaria,2008,166).

She is caught between the discourses of personal freedom on the one hand and those of social norms and traditions on the other. At the same
time she is aware of the fact that it was next to impossible for the two lovers to meet and fulfill their physical desires. The conversation below suggests that the modern lovers live in the world of imagination and get pleasure out of that.

**HE**: I wish we could meet today.
**SHE**: No use starting that all over again. We can’t, and that’s that (Anklesaria, 2008, 166).

The limit of imagination can be predicted when she imagines to be tickle by he and laugh on the phone.

**HE**: OK I’m tickling you
**SHE**: (Laughing outrageously and pretending she is tickled) .......... (Anklesaria, 2008, 168).

Ezekiel shows that on the one hand She is unable to shake off the influence of these patriarchal subjugating discourses, while on the other hand She vehemently asserts her individuality, defends her personal freedom and the right of the body. Through She, Ezekiel wants to drag the idea of gender consciousness which is rooted in the India society. Girls and boys are differentiated from their time of birth and She is also conscious of this fact when She says:

**SHE**: It’s easy for you to talk. You’re free I’m not free. (Anklesaria, 2008, 168).

The society with its moral codes and restrictions is therefore already housed in She’s consciousness. We see in She’s personality a conflict between the real and the performed. The sudden transformation can be seen in the character of She not only as the transformation of her dress, ideas and thought. She appears in sari which is a symbol of the Indian
dress and reflects culture and tradition. She is tied down by the oppressive constraints of the label of Indianness that is imposed on her by the self-styled guardians of social norms and cultural ideals even as she tries to live life on her own terms.

The duality in her character makes her what she is—a post-colonial subject. She is both a subject to the oppressive social apparatus as well as a subject possessed of the liberating western individualism. She is living a dual life due to the pressure of the society. It will be apt to quote these lines in this context:

..........Impact of women’s liberation movement of the sixties and the influence of western feminist thought, a new woman has emerged with her own desires, ambitions and quests to break away the shackles of ages old concepts, beliefs and customs which had chained her to the four walls forcing her to devalue herself. But in the process of their fight against the repressive forces of tradition and prescriptive roles based on idealized models of a bygone era and their desire for newer wider horizons make some of them live dual existence, feel confused, angry and reactive and how some of them determinedly cross these barriers and carve a niche for themselves....... (Anand, 2008, 69).

The conversation, between He and She shows, that in the modern times man has to pretend all the time. She admits that she has to pretend that it is just because of the traditional roots and norms from which she wants to come out and she plays a different role at different times, one with her lover in a bikini all alone and another of society—a woman in sari, but she rejects the later. She delivers a long dialogue regarding her suppression and repression which she has to face from her childhood. Here Ezekiel mocks at some traditional Indian manners and practices and through
them at the society. Through her dialogue, Ezekiel wants to suggest that the first generation parents and their second generation children are in conflict because of their parents’ expectations especially from their daughters to live by the traditional value system of India.

The Indian society does not allow the girls to mix up with the boys. The girl child has to face boundation in each and every phase of her life. In the tradition bound Indian society everything associated with the modern is rejected. In the old psyche there was a cloud of suspicion and distrust. Ezekiel mocks at the Indians who have plenty of talks about money, property and food. They waste their time in gossips. He also mocks at the religious practices in India which are performed endlessly without knowing the meaning. Ezekiel shows how people hate everything which is new and different. They don’t want to accept the new aspects of life; they want to follow their routine and own conventions.

She breaks away from the boundation of the tradition and voices her feelings, desires and thoughts freely. This urge to get freedom break away from the past is the idea of modernity as she rejects the traditional norms and conventions of society which are forced on her. Here Ezekiel brings to our concern the idea that freedom can lead us towards sexual freedom for later in the play we find the totally modern outlook of She. She wants to live alone without interference of society but in reality one cannot ignore the society and get isolated from it.

**SHE:** I don’t want to solve that problem, I want to live, that’s all. (Anklesaria, 2008, 172).

In the end She tears the transparent screen and sits in the lap of He. She assumes that the audience is not there but in reality they are present, this
all signifies that one cannot ignore society, and only the modern man can pretend and ignore reality. Regarding the characters of Ezekiel it can be quoted:

The hollowness inherent in the plays, and the playwright’s, careful manipulation of the characters as types so that the situation dominates – the characters seem to view life as a beach party, with the fun spoiled by grandmother and society; They speak of freedom but all completely unconcerned with responsibility, indeed for them freedom means merely license....... (Blackwell,1976,269).

He is introduced, dressed as pierrot his face resembles a white mask, but he is not actually wearing a mask. The gesture and the body movement of He clarifies his mood. At the table he is shown to sit with his legs widely spread out which suggests his great confidence, almost aggressiveness. He holds his body erect, squares his shoulders and is impatient to talk with She. He dials She very slowly and carefully, as if he is doing some urgent job. The playwright also displays how the life of modern man is being governed by telephone, especially the life of modern lovers. He is a young lover who wishes to make love to his beloved but being unable to meet in reality he starts imagining her and talks with her on the phone.


He wishes to have total isolation from the world and wants to ignore the presence of the society. Even in their imagination the two lovers want to be isolated. He says,

HE: We’re together somewhere, isolated from everybody. (Anklesaria,2008,P161).
He wishes to get freedom like children who are free to do anything as there are no societal pressures on them. Through the character of He, Ezekiel brings to our focus the psyche of modern lovers who like to enjoy life, live in a world of imagination, pretend all the time and lead an artificial life.

**SHE:** Anyway, I prefer the other role, the girl in the bikini.

**HE:** I know you do. That’s why I love you (Anklesaria, 2008, 170).

He suggests to She,

**HE:** We join the underground. (Anklesaria, 2008, 172).

This shows that they are aware of their illegal act and want to hide from the society which is represented by the audience in the theatre.

**HE:** Shut out the audience, the present audience. (Anklesaria, 2008, 173).

As K. Balachandran comments:

She only begins the play – not only the play but also the love play. It is indicative of woman – only she spreads the love net first. Like the fallen Eve tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. She prepares him for the ‘forbidden’ act. During her talk with him she recalls her dog and its nasty rubbing his ‘this thing’ with one foot; and no doubt this has sexual connotations. On the whole She talks 142 times and He 143 times. The play ends with his speech. (Sharma, 1995, 147).

Ezekiel’s artistic excellence impresses beyond measure. The dialogues are very important in one act plays. Ezekiel makes his play easy to understand by using simple and brief language. Only one long speech by She is given to clarify the whole idea about the background, of the play the double
standard of morality for men and women. The playwright uses unconventional words like, ‘Darling’, ‘Poorchap’ ‘Fab’, ‘Goodlord’ etc. He also makes use of erotic vocabulary in his play like ‘rub his this thing’, ‘beautifully dirty’, ‘bathed in perspiration’ ‘lick the perspiration off your body’, ‘salty darling salty’ play together naked like children’. The playwright also uses female anatomy as well as garments like ‘in the armpits’, ‘between the thighs’, ‘in the parting of your hips’ ‘bikini’ ‘lick the perspiration off your body’. He depicts the real situation of the modern urban lovers for whom physical love is much more important than spiritual love. Regarding this it may be quoted:

Sex is part of life no doubt, but the way in which both the characters discuss, seems not healthy sex. Both represent bottlenecked individuals any brief privacy is enough for them to break their suppressed desires and forces. They are the Khajuraro characters in life and the play is a khajuraro in words. It may be even considered as a sermon in disguise though it depicted the art of love making. (Sharma, 1995, 149).

Ezekiel is bold in describing man woman relationship from the biological point of view. He presents it as a normal reality of life. Sex is a normal instinct in man and woman and it is natural if they desire one other for sexual union. Through the play Ezekiel shows that sex is not a myth but a reality like other realities of life. In a very artistic way Ezekiel presents before the audience the bold issue of sex for He believes that love and sex are no longer taboos.

The playwright applies light an effective theatrical device. In the beginning of the play the rooms are brightly lit while the rest of the stage is in darkness. He employs many other devices like the modern urban
gadget bell which She hears and throughout the play ringing of the bell can be heard by the audience. Another theatrical device in the play is the audience; the characters of the play are aware of the audience and wish to go away from the audience. One of the striking factors of the traditional theatre is the relationship between the audience and the actors like in ‘Song of Deprivation’, participation of the audience is shown. Both the characters address the audience during the action of the play. This keeps the audience involved in the action of the play. Thus it is one of the traditional devices which is used by the playwright in the modern context.

The play uses light comedy according to the nature of the play. The traditional theatre reflects high stylized action through music and dance. Music and dance are two elements which develop the total concept for the traditional theatre. The excessive implication of these elements represent playwright’s blending of traditional theatrical form with the modern theatre. Music plays an important role in the play. As the play begins we hear a light popular rhythmic music for two minutes before opening of the curtain. In all the plays of Ezekiel music acts as an effective theatrical device. Throughout the play She keeps on playing transistors which throws music on which they both dance together. Transistor becomes one of the instruments of dispersing music on the stage and describes the mood of the characters. This excursive use of the music is a sign of modernization which includes the increased communication in the form of radio, phone etc. Music is functional and organic to the performance. It also becomes integral to the actors, gaits, movements and physical acting. It emphasizes the actor’s entrance and exits, highlights their movements and provides a frame for visual images.
The play is a beautiful blend of the old and the new, of religious-cure philosophy and worldliness cum-sensuality, of traditional and modern value system. The character of He and She are modern but they are tied down by the conventions of society due to which they are unable to meet. It is the pressure of society which restricts their freedom. Ezekiel has created a realistic amalgamation of Western and Indian value systems.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER V

Don't Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd

Theatre Form to Indian Theatre
Don’t Call it Suicide: A two act tragedy was published in 1993. The action of the play takes place in one room and comprises of the characters belonging to one family only. As Ezekiel himself says it is based on a real life incident and tells about the background of the play.

............... ‘I was told about the event by an acquaintance of mine in an Indian city (not Bombay). It was about his son and family... but did not confine myself to his experience, relatives, etc. (Don’t Call it Suicide,VIII).

The play was first staged by the British council, Bombay in 1989, and moves around the recollection of the suicide of the eldest son of Mr and Mrs. Nanda. The play was published nearly twenty five years after Song of Deprivation (1969). It is a domestic tragedy of death, guilt remorse and atonement. It begins with the recollection of a suicide around which the whole story revolves and ends with the suicide of the protagonist Mr. Nanda.

It will be apt to quote about the inspiration of the play,

... ‘I had no literary source for the creation of the play’. The real life incident served as a catalyst to explore the nature of suicide and its effect on the survivors.... (Don’t Call it Suicide,IX)

The playwright has always been focusing his attention on the problems and conditions of the middle – class.
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

Ezekiel has voiced the typical modernist’s resistance for Indian convention and prejudices. Ezekiel, in this play deals with ordinary people, their day to day life, relationships, frustrations and he expects his reader or audience to recognize and identify them with the modern man struggling with a life full of dilemma. In the beginning we find the discussion between Nanda and Mr. Sathe on some business matters but soon the matter changes when Mr. Nanda tells Sathe about the tragedy which happened in his family. Ezekiel turns his personal emotion into structural emotion which becomes artistic emotion at the end. Ezekiel takes a situation, examines it, and describes it in such a way that it appears to display social realities.

The title of the play is very uncommon which suggests that someone has died an unnatural death i.e. suicide because it was not homicide or an accident. The whole play centres around one major happening that is the suicide of Mr. Nanda’s son, and ends with Mr. Nanda’s suicide. The whole question throughout the play is what are we to call it? Whether Mr. Nanda and his elder son committed suicide or not or whether they came in the fourth category of premature death? As one of the critic comments:

… Ezekiel has treated this delicate issue of suicide with deep identification rooted in everyday angst. Such charged emotion spares no one. His characters seethe and reveal, probe and discern, scathing, the families and neighbors leaving each reader with a storm within as an aftermath. An essential storm for our evolution as socially sensitive individuals..... (Iyer, 2007, 95).

It’s a short play in two acts. Act I contains five scene and in Act II there are three scenes. The story of the play revolves around one family. The plot of
the play is based on one incident whether to call an unnatural death of a young man, suicide or not. There is unity of place as the entire action take place in the drawing room. The play has a compact and neat structure. The play opens with the discussion of the suicide of Mr. Nanda’s eldest son and ends with the suicide of Mr. Nanda. Thus the play begins with suicide and ends with the suicide without any development in between. In the beginning Mr. Nanda recalls the memory of his son’s suicide and further the time moves ahead one month which is indicated by the warm clothes of Mr. and Mrs. Nanda. During the play characters talk about the past. The plot of the play is straight forward.

The play takes place in a middle-class drawing room. The play is about a middle class family of an Indian city. All the action takes place in the house of Mr. Nanda.

....The Son’s suicide in the play is a stronger version of loud bell in Nalini, or the husband’s affairs in Marriage poem. It is something that breaks into the ordered and artificial space of the middle class drawing room, and the characters largely react by sealing themselves from this seepage. Ezekiel’s drawing room is a bleak one. Largely a space of denial, pretence, apathy lies.... (Anklesaria,2008,548).

Time passes but the setting remains the same throughout the play. The play has a complex theme:

It seems to be significant that Ezekiel’s first major return to the dramatic mode in the 80’s also handles the theme of domestic drama because in this later play (Don’t call it suicide) the view of marriage is equally dismal and unredeemed........ (Pandey,1990,78)

The play deals with many complexities and limitations of the middle class, its passive, disinterested approach towards life, moulding of children
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre under the dominance of parents, the unjustified ways of the materialistic society which exploits the simple, sensitive and weak class. The play has a restrained style and complex theme and it depicts characters in the light of the contemporary problems. The play contains a unique blend of themes in the modern as well as traditional context. Thus, at the thematic level the play is an expression of a combination of traditional and contemporary lifestyles. The play analyses the issue of modern man’s sufferings, problem, growing insecurities and fear. It aptly reveals contemporary reality, social satire, and condition of women, man woman relationship, marital conflicts and a sharp criticism of society. The theme of the play is very complex, as mentioned in the introduction of the play.

It is difficult to pin down the theme of the play with a bottom line... (Don’t Call it Suicide, X).

The protagonist of the play is the eldest son of Mr. Nanda because his suicide affected everyone’s life in the family. His suicide becomes the subject of subconscious narrative in play and even after fourteen years of the incident, affects the lives of the family members. The theme of the play is alienation, as the elder son of Mr. Nanda finds himself isolated in the family and society. This hostile environment and closed society compels him to commit suicide. The ideas of the eldest son of Mr. Nanda are different from the others as he seems to be unduly sensitive. As Ezekiel puts it in the play,

... ‘My view is that Indian society, as a whole, is implicated in that and similar situations. The individual way of life, independent, wholly unconventional, has no place among the fixed tradition options........ (Don’t Call it Suicide,X).
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

There are many reasons behind the alienation. In this regard it can be said:

........Mr. Nanda emulates his son, and in the process illustrates a disconcerting aspect of both men. They are introverted to the point of dangerous self-centeredness, negligent of their responsibility to their spouses. They are guilty of solipsism, of holding, the philosophical position that only one’s own experience can be known, of creating an island of personal feeling surrounded by a sea of social norms and values which they choose to ignore.... (Don’t Call it Suicide, X).

Ezekiel himself is conscious of the double impulse in him and wants to identify himself with the multiple identity crises in contemporary India. He is natural outsider due to his private history but tries to connect himself with modern India.

Ezekiel’s play centers on the isolation of the hypersensitive individual in a rough and tumble world, where the end justifies the means, and the winner take all. (Don’t Call it Suicide, XII).

The reason behind the isolation of human being is spasmodic cultural, social and political convulsions. Hari in his soliloquy describes the condition of his elder brother which reflects how he felt isolated, and in turn alienated himself from others.

The unnamed elder son of Mr. Nanda finds himself estranged from society. He has no communication with other members in his family as well as his wife Meeta and eventually ends his life in utter depression. It can be said that his social alienation from the people paves the way for his existential alienation.

Hari: ... I was 22 when my elder brother died. To most people, he seemed quite ordinary. I often had that view of him, but not always. From time to time he would say or do
The theme of alienation runs through all the plays of Nissim Ezekiel. His plays are expressions of the problems of human life which are attempted to be resolved through the actual conflicts of human activity. Human beings are instinctively contradictory in behaviour and that results in conflict which brings in distortion and destruction. These conflicts, repressions, and violence destroy the mind of human beings and leave them with nameless annuities and undefined vacuum. In the play Ezekiel talks about this gap which is created due to conflict and contradiction. He comments,

Sathe: Well, he may be temperamentally incapable of meeting society’s standards of success. If those standards were more flexible, if they provided more space, you understand, for different temperaments the so called failure would feel free to live his own life according to his own preferences, inclinations.

Nanda: What do you mean by more space? I know our apartment is very small but in today’s conditions we can’t get a larger one.

Sathe: No, no, not that kind of space. I mean tolerance, freedom, and understanding. Not insistence on our terms for accepting people but acceptance of their temperament.

Nanda: How does all this apply to my poor son?

Sathe: ... It seemed to him that a failure, real or so called had no right to live, by society’s standards. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act II Sc III, 30)
Thus the elder son of Mr. Nanda protests against the prevailing circumstances and the rigidity of the society. Ezekiel depicts inner and outer, external and internal, physical and metaphysical contrast of values and a ceaseless struggle to survive with the double standards and demands of society. This provokes man for competition, rivalry, misery, suffering, inequality etc. If one is unable to bear the pressures of society, he finds himself inferior and isolated. The eldest son with traditional ways of thinking finds himself to be alienated and unfit in the modern society and commits suicide.

The eldest son of Mr. Nanda got married to a girl who is not even matriculate\textsuperscript{1}, at the age of 23. The culture of compulsory marriage as a status symbol, and mismatching between two counter parts lead to drastic consequences. Mr. Nanda laments and recollects,

\begin{quote}
Nanda: We told our eldest son that we would arrange a marriage for him, not here, in a different place, a very small town, with hardly any prospects for him. It was very difficult. We couldn’t get a really fine girl for him. She wasn’t highly educated, infact, she was not even a matriculate. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 4).
\end{quote}

Similarly, Mr. Nanda finds society and himself responsible for the suicide of his son and feels guilty about it in his own surrounding. He internally faces conflict and unable to cope with society around him and his wife Mrs. Nanda, who is always lost in the memory of his son’s suicide heightens his suffering. Lack of sharing and loneliness leads him to succumb to suicide in the end in a very pathetic way.

Ezekiel reveals, through his plays, the contemporary realities. His ideas are basically related to contemporary Indian realities. He takes all his characters from common life and exposes the realities of the modern
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre
times. Ezekiel exposes the attitude of many girls’ parents who think that after their daughter’s marriage they are free from all responsibilities. This reveals how calculative the parent of a girl are, who believe that their duty to be over after marriage. In Don’t Call it Suicide, after the death of the eldest son, his wife Meeta goes back to her parent’s house where they refuse to support her by saying,

Nanda: .......How can we support her for the rest of our lives?.......... (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,ScI,5).

But Mr. Nanda accepts his widowed daughter-in-law and give, her shelter. He writes to her parents,

........Send her here, we’ll look after her. We are not rich either but we’ll look after her.......... (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,ScI,5).

The playwright puts his own experiences ^observation about the conditions of life around him through the character of Mr. Nanda when he suggests:

Nanda: ...Things are pretty bad in India, aren’t they? Terrorists, communalists, but never mind that just now,.... (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,ScIII,15).

All the conditions and situations presented in the play are close to human life and create a credible plot with a realistic setting. Thus, Ezekiel puts forward all the peculiarities which are available in the modern Indian society. It will be apt to quote in this context

... Existential commitment... Would be a mockery, for most of us are slaves of the city’s unceasing drive, banality and futility. Cabined thus within the rampart of urban delusion what can there be for man.... (Iyer,2007,79).
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

Ezekiel presents through the play, the sharp social satire and comments on the society; he gets inspiration from the society around him. The playwright criticizes the condition of higher ups in the society through the conversation between Mr. Nanda and Gopal. He shows the inhumanity of higher ups in the society. Gopal replies to the questions of Mr. Nanda.

Gopal: ... the inhumanity we see in ordinary, everyday life. 
(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc III, 15).

Further he said,

Gopal: Like humiliating people, bossing over them, treating them badly because we are in a position to. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc III, 15).

In India the growth of industrialization and the frantic establishment of urbanization bring out the oppression of common workers. Further, in the play Gopal explains the condition of the higher officers who treat their servants badly and misbehave with the subordinates. He says,

Gopal: My company .... A branch manager will always treat another branch manager politely, but he will not be polite to his executive assistants those who work under him, and of course, never to his head clerk or other subordinates.... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc V, 22).

Ezekiel comments upon the functioning of companies in India. Gopal works in a very efficient company, Nanda comments

...... Many Indian companies are run in such a slipshod way, in efficiently, indifferently and government run companies are of course bureaucratic.... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc V, 22).

The play bears some autobiographical overtones in the depiction of class oriented conflicts and social realities. Ezekiel’s own experience and
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

observation forces him to become a social critic. Ezekiel worked hard in his own life; he worked in an advertising company and on a ship. He has seen the pathetic condition of human beings. His plays are reflection of his keen observation and realistic vision. He is a keen observer of human relationships especially in lower and middle class society. Ezekiel portrays the agonies, suffocations and injustice, focusing particularly on those of the middle class. This play especially suits to the modern context and moralizes the condition of modern man. Contemporary society reinforces the atmosphere of disillusionment and disorientation. Ezekiel gives voice to the devoiced common people, their dreams, aspirations, sufferings, agonies and frustrations. It is a sharp satire on the condition of women in India. The women are treated as slaves and still have a submissive and subordinate position in the society, as the pathetic condition of Meeta and Malti are the reflectors of the social discrimination. Ezekiel also seems to mock institution of marriage in which husband and wife have no equal partnership; one suffers and another enjoys; one acts as a master and another serves, like Malti and Hari.

Ezekiel, through his plays, makes us aware of the contemporary society and the rot that has set in. As an artist he does not offer any solution, but suggests a pattern that may be adopted. Discerning readers realize how Ezekiel has established himself as a social critic and his plays bear testimony to it.

The playwright criticizes the concept of modernity, as modernity allows changes and it also involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases. But here, Ezekiel satirizes the concept of modernism as the conversation between Mr. Nanda and Gopal shows,

Nanda: ... How are things in your office?
Gopal: Much as usual. Lots of changes, you know, but as someone has said, “The more things change, the more they remain the same” (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc III, 15).

The statement of Gopal suggests that the social or cultural conditions change with the passage of time but the behavior of human being remain the same, as said by Mr. Nanda:


Through Mr. Nanda’s character, Ezekiel comments not only on companies but on everything which he says are inefficient bureaucratically. Ezekiel displays the actual condition of women through characteristics such as being in total willful acceptance of slavery and domination by males or will less passivity as a feature of injustice. Malti reflects:

Malti: ….. The choice for all of those millions of women in our country, whom you mentioned, is between being a happy slave or an unhappy slave. There is no other choice......... (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc IV, 19).

He presents the condition of the widow through the character of Meeta. In Indian society widows are treated badly and cruelly by the society from ancient times and even after modernization their state remains the same. Meeta, who is rejected by her own parents get shelter in her in-laws home where she has to do all the work: washing, cooking, cleaning. She is treated as an outsider who is not allowed to talk or eat with the family members. Her lamentable condition is the representation of widow’s plight in India. Another female character is Malti who displays the women who are oppressed by her husband. Malti becomes a representative
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

character reveal the life of millions of wives or women who leads life of submissiveness under male domination. Shiela comments:

Shiela: ........ You have decided to do nothing about your situation, like millions of other women in our country. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Scene V, 19).

The plight of Malti conveys that the real cause behind the subordination of women lies not in the scriptural laws, or in any flaws in women’s nature but in their innate filial and maternal instincts. Malti accepts the inferior position to her husband.

Malti: ........I am his slave, and wife. What I have become is a happy slave...... it is better than being an unhappy slave. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Scene V, 19).

Another face of women is presented through the character of Shiela, who is the only female character that raises a voice against the male domination in an unjust society. Economic independence and influence of western feminist movements play a significant role in bringing a change in the attitude and position of women in India as shown by Shiela.

Shiela: ......Tell him frankly what is troubling you. Argue with him. He is your husband..... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Scene V, 19).

The playwright displays women’s viewpoint and emotional responses and their experiences through the character of Sheila, and suppression and submissiveness through the characters of Meeta and Malti. As Lily Want writes,

…… Ezekiel’s strong sense for individual freedom and a deep concern for the underprivileged governs his latest play Don’t call it suicide. The play highlights the subjection of women in a patriarchal system they cannot avoid living in. He once again offers us an insight into the contemporary reality where the
new women’s desire to be valued as a person and to be accepted as a competitive social personality is vengefully smothered…… (Want, 2004, 116).

One of the themes of the play is the man-woman relationship, cultural specificity in the Indian society. There are four couples in the play and all reflect the different aspects of married life. Gender politics and sexual politics make personal appear political in the play. Traditionally rooted Indian characters find affinities with the western models as mentioned here:

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....... Mr. and Mrs. Nanda are Indian echoes of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, stripped bare of the good natured comedy of the domineering wife and the meek husband in the novel....... (Don’t Call it Suicide, XII).
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Another couple is the elder son of Mr. Nanda and his widowed wife Meeta. He has a sensitive nature and throughout lives for himself. He has no feeling and responsibility towards his wife and leaves his wife all alone in the world and commits suicide. On the other hand, Gopal and Shiela are example of the perfect couple. They co-exist and reflect a happy matrimonial relationship. By cooperating with each other and understanding each other’s rights and feelings. Hari and Malti represent another just opposite roles of Mr. Nanda and Mrs. Nanda, where the husband dominates the wife. He has inherited his mother’s domineering nature and is a male chauvinist who feels that men are superior to women. The gender bias and conflicts arise in the play due to the sense of male superiority complex.

Ezekiel criticizes the human beings who talk about inhumanity but at the same time is blind towards the inhumanity which, they actually see, like Gopal and Mr. Nanda discuss about the cruel behaviour of human beings
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

but Gopal himself ignores Meeta, the suffering soul. Further the playwright criticizes the women who silently tolerate the harsh and inhuman behaviour of their husbands and in case of Meeta, of the society and family.

In Don’t Call it Suicide, he portrays a picture of disharmonious martial relationship. In the play Mr. and Mrs. Nanda depend on each other, but they have no genuine communion between them. As said by Vrinda Nabar,

"Don’t call it suicide; on the other hand, projects the sham security of a superficially placid, “working” marriage. Inspite of a seeming harmony, it soon becomes apparent that there is little joy in this marriage either..." (Pandey, 1990, 78).

The playwright presents a composite picture of Indian custom of marriage. Mr. Nanda and Mrs. Nanda’s mundane exchanges, the dominating nature of Mrs. Nanda on the other hand, the pathetic condition of widow of elder son. Meeta, she has no status in the house, she lives as a slave and is not even matriculate; she is, dependent and vulnerable. It is Mrs. Nanda who treats her daughter in law badly. Malti who is wife of Hari beaten by her husband and forced to leave all her individuality. She is not allowed to give her opinion and is afraid of her husband.

Ezekiel seems to comment at the traditional institution of marriage and displays the different shades of marriage and changing facet in the modern time and how the psychology of man affects his or her relationship. The play has a domestic content as it shows the life and tragedy of one family.
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

The play also reflects how, in the current society, the state of human beings change according to their position in the society. As Gopal reveals the idea:

Gopal: ...........But every individual is treated according to the power level on which he functions. A branch manager will always treat another branch manager politely, but he will not be polite to his executive assistants, those who work under him, and of course, never to his head clerk or other subordinates. No one below you on the management scale is treated as a human being even a simple request is made sternly, and often arrogantly that’s the problem we all face.......... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act1,ScV,22).

The play has an element of violence. The violence is not in the form of war or killing someone but it can be predicted through the use of sharp words, gesture etc. In our society most of us accept violence as a way of life. The dominant social and personal contradictions take the form of violence. The way Meeta is treated in the play is a kind of violence. She is the widowed daughter-in-law of Mrs. Nanda, but she is treated worse than a slave. She is not allowed to talk and have food with the family members and she is ignored by everyone. As Mr. Nanda expresses her condition,

Meeta is not a servant. She is our daughter in law, we should treat Meeta as a human being she is a human being, too you know. (Don’t Call it Suicide, XII)

The conversation between Mr. Nanda and Gopal also reveals the violence in the nature of the human being, as violence is innate in man. He says,

Mr. Nanda: Things are pretty bad in India, aren’t they? Terrorist communists, how are things in the office?
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

Gopal: Much as usual. Lots of changes, you know, but as someone said; “The more things change, the more they remain the same”,

Gopal: After all, we know what it means to be inhuman—we understand that, but we overlook the in humanity we see in ordinary, everyday life. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc II, 15).*

But in reality they all ignore and mistreat Meeta. Malti reveals she is treated by her husband as a slave, often beaten by him. Shiela says,

Shiela: Why don’t you tell Hari this truth? Tell him you consider yourself a happy slave, no more than a slave even if a happy one..... Tell him that. He may feel ashamed. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act IV Sc I, 19).*

Malti: He won’t be ashamed. He will only be angry. He will tell me to shut up. He will beat me. He has already beaten me so many times. Do you want me to take that risk again? *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act IV Sc IV, 20).*

Ezekiel shows how in the common day life human beings have to face the violence in the different form. One of the worst forms of violence which becomes the central issue in the play is ‘suicide’ of the elder son of Mr. Nanda, who committed suicide because he was incapable of facing life.

Nanda: ........My eldest son never did well in his exams. He never failed, but he never did well either ........ My second son and my daughter were doing very well in their exams...... *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I Sc I, 14).*

There are many factors which are responsible for the terrible misery and pathetic condition of human beings; one of them is comparison.

Mr. Nanda remarks:
Mr. Nanda: I am not satisfied to be what I am. I am not satisfied with my life as it is.

Mrs. Nanda: I don’t mean complete satisfaction. I mean to the extent that it is so much better, than the lives of so many other people. (*Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 7*).

Another factor which leads man to greater illusion and misery is fear. In a modern society each and every individual faces fear of some kind. We all are afraid of living, family, public opinion, feel insecure. All the characters in the play have some kind of fear within themselves. As the fear of eldest son, who was unable to face himself, and thus committed suicide. His state of mind is described by Hari,

Hari: .....A strange kind of sensitiveness, a hopeless kind. You may say. I know that he suffered a lot in normal situations which did not trouble other people, as for instance in school or college. Why should any student be miserable because some teachers are bad or some students don’t care about education? So what? Let them be what they are. Why should we be so sad about it that we actually want to die?........... (*Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc III, 13*).

Meeta also has a fear of insecurity. She is a widow and has no one who will look after her; her own parents refuse to help her and she chooses to live with her in-laws but like a servant. She admits,

Meeta: My only consolation is, I have a home. My father-in-law and mother-in-law provide for all my needs—sometimes I am asking myself what will happen when my father-in-law and mother-in-law are no longer there... (*Don’t Call it Suicide, IX*).
Thus, she has a feeling of insecurity and fear of leaving a home and being alone. Like Meeta, Malti the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Nanda has same fear of losing her husband and she lives life of a ‘Devdasi’

Malti: He tells me to stop arguing, to obey him, to carry out his wishes, or to get out of this house. How can, I get out of the house. Where can I go? What about my children. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, IX).

The suicide of the eldest son becomes a fear factor in the lives of Mr. Nanda and Mrs. Nanda and Mrs. Nanda doesn’t want to discuss the death of her son.

She says:

Mrs. Nanda: (Loudly) Don’t say suicide everytime you mention his death say, his death, that’s all. And why mention it at all? We can’t do anything about it anyway. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, ActI,ScII,9).

Further she says,

Mrs. Nanda: ........Mr. Sathe, please don’t use the word suicide for what my eldest son did. Call it death. And I beg of you, not to discuss the subject at all with my husband. Don’t even mention it to him again. Just drop it, forget it- it upsets my husband terribly. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, 28).

The theme of suffering runs throughout the play, all the characters suffer because of society, family or their own self. The play begins with a note of tragedy, and ends on a note of tragedy; hence, it is a play about eternal suffering of human being. The eldest son suffers from his own sensitive nature and society and commits suicide. This brings his wife Meeta to greater suffering who has no option but to work like a servant or a slave.
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

in her in-laws’ house where she is not allowed to communicate with her in-laws.

Nanda: I would like Meeta to be one of us, even if she does the cooking and he serving and the washing up I’ve been thinking about it. We should treat Meeta as a human being. She’s a human being too, you know. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc II, 12).*

Malti, who is daughter in-law of Mr. Nanda and the wife of Hari leads life as a ‘Devdasi’ or a slave. She regards herself as a ‘happy slave.’ She is not allowed to hold her own opinion and can avail a right to express. She follows Hari’s orders blindly out of fear. Often she is beaten by Hari. She admits to Sheila,

Malti: ...........He will only be angry. He will tell me to shut up. He will beat me. He has already beaten me so many times........... *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc IV, 20).*

The playwright employs the Marxist criticism in the play and talks about the class differences, gender discrimination and the struggle forced upon by the upper class on the lower class. As according to the Marxism,

The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classes society ...........the exploitation of one social class by another is seen especially in modern industrial capitalism particularly in its unrestricted nineteenth century form the result of this exploitation is alienation........... *(Barry, 2007, 157).*

In the play, Gopal and Mr Nanda discuss about class struggle.

Gopal: ..... But every individual is treated according to the power level on which he functions. A branch manager will always treat another branch manager politely, but he will not be polite to his executive assistants, those who work under him, and of course, never to his head
clerk or other subordinates. No one below you on the Management scale is treated as a human being. Even a simple request is made sternly, and often arrogantly. That's the problem we all face. We don't know now we put up with it day after day. (*Don't Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc IV, 22).

Ezekiel presents before us the issue of class conflict in the contemporary context and shows how this problem exists in modern time and affects the life of the modern man.

Gopal: yes, I blame myself for putting up with them
Nanda: I blame myself, too, but that doesn’t improve matters. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc IV, 22).

.................................................................

Nanda: That’ll be very useful to me, thought I gave up a long time ago trying to do anything about such human problems. Come, let’s join the others. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc IV, 23).

According to the theory the writer’s social class and its prevailing ‘ideology’ (outlook, values, tacit assumption, half-realized allegiances etc) have a major bearing on what is written by members of that class. All the plays of Nissim Ezekiel are based on the middle class urban Indian men and women; he deals with the family life of modern man as he himself belongs to middle class. He worked hard to get money, he has experience of several job in different fields and has seen the harsh side of life. Thus, this drama reveals his own observations. In his writing, one can find the realistic representation of society. The Marxist critic relates the literacy work to the social assumptions of the time in which it is consumed. Thus, this idea can be applied on the play as it reflects all the social problems of modern time. It deals with the suicide of the elder son, the pathetic
Don't Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

condition of Meeta, and status of women as wife in the modern society, the issue of inhumanity, and feeling of isolation. All these issue reveals how the playwright portrays the social realities on one canvass. The character of Mr. Nanda as well as the eldest son can be realized in the light of psychoanalytic criticism of Freud according to which:

The underlying assumption is that when some wish, fear, memory, or desire is difficult to face we may try to cope with it by representing it, that is, eliminating it from the conscious mind. But this doesn't make it go away: it remains alive in the unconscious mind like radioactive matter buried beneath the ocean, and constantly seeks a way back into the conscious mind, always succeeding eventually." (Barry, 2007, 100).

The play can be analyzed in the light of psychoanalytic criticism as all the characters have some sort of inner fear, unfulfilled wish and suppressed desire within them in their unconscious mind. Due to these repressed feeling they are forced to behave in a particular manner.

The Freudian theory can be applied on the character of Mr. Nanda, as Mr. Nanda’s elder son committed suicide at the age of 25. He is always lost in the memory of the tragic incident of his son’s suicide. He has desire within him to know why his son committed suicide. He was unable to forget this tragedy. Thus he unconsciously cultivates a death wish inside and embrace death as a consequence.

Mrs. Nanda was also responsible for the behavior and personality of her elder son, who found himself isolated, and Hari, who inherits his mother’s domineering nature, is harsh towards his own wife as well as to others. He has no love for his father, brother or sister. And unconsciously Mrs. Nanda drags her husband near to death. The latter finds himself responsible for
the suicide of his son, condition of Meeta and slowly feels lonely and as a result committed suicide. Thus it is the unconsciousness which has a strong influence upon the action of the individual Meeta as well as Malti have a consciousness in their mind about being homeless. Thus this fear made them submissive and fall as victims. They quietly and calmly follow the instruction of their master as for Meeta it is Mrs. Nanda and for Malti, her own husband. They both are degraded to the levels of slaves. Thus consciousness of being lonely and homeless affects their action and unconsciously they react in a particular manner.

Meeta: For the rest of my life, when I am alone, what will I do? If I get a job as cook or servant, I will still be without home where I will sleep and how I will line I don’t know. For people like me there is no place in the whole world....... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act 1, Sc 1, 9).

Almost all the characters can be analyzed through the concept of Freud’s psychoanalytic criticism. The play has a feminist appeal too, as the idea of one Feminist critic is appropriate in the context of the play:

‘Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar use the idea of ‘Social castration which amounts to the same thing, for this term signifies women’s lack of social power. This lack being represented by means of the word ‘Castration,’ as a male possession, though not as in any sense a male, attribute. (Barry, 2007, 131).

Due to lack in the social sensitivity to widows in the Hindu Marriage Act, Malti is forced to lead the life of ‘Devdasi’.

Meeta, is widowed daughter in-law of Mr. Nanda, lives her life as a slave in the house of her in-laws, where she is not allowed to have food with any one or talk with her brothers and sister-in-law. Hari, who is powerful and strong, believes in bossing over people and even his
wife. Thus, Ezekiel brings forward the plight of women who are treated badly in the society due to the lack of ‘social power’. Meeta is uneducated widow, and Malti, who has no option after her marriage, accept their submissiveness. The playwright focuses the attention on the condition of women in India who feel themselves inferior and subordinate to the men and to the male counter parts who find themselves in a stronger position. Jacqueline Rose remarks:

‘Sexual identity to be a ‘Cultural construct’” (Barry, 2007,132).

Cultural factors are very important in developing the identity of a person. In the Indian culture women are expected to follow their husbands and if they fail to observe this, they are victimized by the society. Thus, culturally they are instructed from the childhood to be shy and submissive. It is the society which is the basic force behind this inequality of gender. It will be apt to quote the ideas of one of the critics of Marxist feminism:

.........In the public sphere women performs jobs for lower wages and in the private they perform domestic labor without any wages thus producing merely use-value and not exchange-value women’s status is like that of a proletariat whose Labor is used by those who control the means of production..... man is paid enough for his family so that the woman can stay home to perform the domestic labor such as cooking, cleaning, child rearing that keeps the proletariat a live......... (Mazumdar, 2005,19).

Hari: O course, you do you have to, otherwise you wouldn’t be a real mother. (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,ScIV,18).

This particular dialogue of Hari reflects how according to men, the duty of women is to carry out the domestic work, bring up children and obeys
him like a slave. Hari is aware of his behavior but doesn’t want to change it; rather, he feels comfortable following this domineering attitude.

Hari: .... It’s quite alright as it is. I don’t want it to be improved.......*(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc IV, 20).*

Thus Ezekiel is aware of the condition of women in the Indian society who is suppressed by men since the ancient times. Women are considered to be inferior to men. Ezekiel presents the cruelty and injustice which is faced by the women in modern Indian society.

The play *Don’t Call it Suicide* is a tragedy which involves the victim, victimizers and the rescuer. The concept of the Rescue triangle can be applied on the play. This concept is taken from ‘Transactional Analyses’ a new Freudian School of Psychology by Dr. Eric Berne and developed by Stephen Karp-man, also known as the Karp-man Drama triangle. According to this concept there are three roles in the Drama Triangle the rescuer, the persecutor and the victim. Every character suffers from some psychological problem. He, consciously or unconsciously, acts in one of these roles, instead of living life naturally. According to one’s inner feeling they choose roles and act and behave in the same manner. The guilty feeling makes one rescuer and the angry feeling force him to play the role of persecutor; the helpless feelings make him a victim. The person unconsciously plays these roles. The rescuer feels himself superior to victim as the victim is helpless and hopeless. Sometimes the feeling of guilt hovers over him and by his or her circumstances he himself becomes victim. The persecutor, like the rescuer feels himself superior to the victim. He finds himself correct all the time, and out of frustration and anger, he behaves badly with the victim or ill-treats him verbally or physically, and sometime she becomes the victim and one can find that
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

there is temporary reversal of roles. The victim feels himself helpless and allows everyone to exploit him and to take advantage of him. He or she does not try to help him but silently becomes a victim. He wants rescue from the rescuers but never does anything to save himself. But sometimes the victim unconsciously becomes the persecutor, and becomes the source of suffering. The role of the rescuer, the persecutor or the victim is not permanent. But at one time one can play only one role and shift his or her role according to the demand of the situation. Thus, the roles are interchangeable and temporary.

“Every Rescuer-victim transaction will eventually result in a persecutor victim transaction” (Steiner, 1974, 184).

The Drama triangle can be shown by the diagram.

In the play almost every character seems to be involved in the Drama Triangle. Mr. Nanda who wants to save his daughter in law Meeta from the ill treatment of Mrs. Nanda, plays the role of the rescuer. He becomes the rescuer and the widowed daughter-in-law becomes the victim.
Mr. Nanda finds himself and others responsible for the suicide of his son, and the feeling of guilt brings him near to the role of the victim. He also acts as victim at the hand of his wife who dominates him in all these circumstances and brings him to commit suicide. From the concept of the Drama Triangle, it is learnt that the favourite feeling of the rescuer is guilty feeling. He feels inadequate about himself, and guilt about his shortcomings and weaknesses. Another rescuer is Sheila who wants to save the life of Malti from her husband Hari, who beats her and regards her as a slave. Sheila is able to understand the feelings of Malti, as she can equate the condition of Malti with millions of other women and feel pity of Malti. These emotions make Sheila a rescuer.

Shiela: How can I want to say it when you tell me it want be of any use? You have decided to do nothing about your situations, like millions of other women in our country.

Malti: what can I do? What do you want me to do? (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc IV, 9).

Shiela: Don’t be afraid of Hari. Tell him frankly what is troubling you. Argue with him. He is your husband. Even if he disagrees he ought to know your views, try to understand your feeling. Why is that impossible? (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc II, 19).

Mrs. Nanda is the persecutor. Like a persecutor she has anger and ill feeling for Meeta, her daughter-in-law, whom she treats as a servant. Meeta becomes a victim at the hands of Mrs. Nanda.

Mrs. Nanda: ..... I will give you instructions later.....

Nanda: Whenever Shiela and Hari come to us, Meeta gets no time to talk to them, I feel she should sit with us for a change, and talk to them, to us.

Mr. Nanda: ..... What.
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

Meeta: I will do all the work, and then if there is a little time I will..........

Mrs. Nanda: Impossible! Before the dinner you will be busy cooking, and after the dinner there is the clearing up and the washing up. (Don’t Call it Suicide, ActI,ScII,10).

Mrs. Nanda: You forget that Meeta also has to eat in the kitchen after dinner. (Don’t Call it Suicide, ActI,ScII,11).

Mrs. Nanda has no sympathy or love for Meeta.

Mr. Nanda: ....I allowed my eldest son’s widow, Meeta, to live with us, but that’s only because she is helpful to me in the house. (Don’t Call it Suicide, ActII,ScII,23).

But in the end she herself becomes a victim and widow like Meeta. The persecutor turns into victim when her husband commits suicide and leaves her alone. She becomes a victim and suffers the pain of losing her son as well as husband.

Mrs. Nanda: why did you do it? Why have you added to my suffering? I lost a son. Now I’ve lost my husband. What have I done to deserve this?............ (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActII,ScIII,33).

In the end Meeta gives her help, as she comes in the end and puts her arms around Mrs. Nanda. This unconsciously turns Meeta into rescuer, and in return Mrs Nanda turns and clutches Meeta by saying ‘oh, my daughter’. Thus, there is a role reversal of the persecutor into victim and victim into rescuer. Mrs. Nanda also acts as persecutor for her husband. She is a domineering wife and runs her house according to her nature. She wins always in the end as this conservation shows:
Nanda: ....... I was thinking of Meeta, how to give her a chance to be one of us.

Nanda: .......I’m telling you again, if you want Meeta to eat with us and talk with us, then I will do the work or you do the work........ (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act1, Sc1, 12).

But sometimes, Mrs. Nanda becomes a rescuer for her husband. She wants to save her husband from the tragic memory of her son’s suicide. She stops Mr. Sathe from discussing before him, the incident of suicide of their son.

Mrs. Nanda: ....... you won’t be alright I know you; we’ve been married so many years. I can see you now heading for disaster, and I’m feeling you now, stop it stop. (Don’t Call it Suicide, ActII, ScII, 27).

She is also the cause of the dominating behaviour of Hari who inherits his mother’s nature. Mrs. Nanda always keeps the children away from their father which affects their personality.

Mrs. Nanda: You have never loved your father, never, not, since you were a child.
Hari: who taught me not to love him?
Mrs. Nanda: Oh no, don’t blame me for that. I had to bring up my children in the right way. Your father had all kinds of silly Ideas. About how to treat children. I believed in teaching them discipline. That is why I had to keep you at a distance from your father. It does not mean you shouldn’t love him after all, he is your father. (Don’t Call it Suicide, ActII, ScI, 24).

Mrs. Nanda affects the personality development of her son which turns him into a persecutor. Hari, who becomes unconsciously the victim at the
hands of his mother, turns into a persecutor who tortures his wife Malti, and treat her as a slave.

Thus, the concept of Drama Triangle helps in analyzing the different roles played by the characters in a particular situation. The concept helps in predicting the shifting of roles of the characters because most of us suffer from various psychological problems without knowing their hazardous effects on our lives.

Ezekiel’s characters in this play are not entangled in any extra-ordinary contexts or situations, but explore the realities of life through experiences. The characters in the play could be divided into two groups: the sentimentalists and the pragmatists. In the first group, Mr. Nanda can be included and the rest of the characters, under the sentimentalists and pragmatists. In another level, the characters can be divided into three groups; the humanitarians Mr. Nanda, Mr. Sathe, Shiela and Gopal; the insensitive autocrats, Mrs. Nanda and Hari; and the victims, Meeta and Malti.

I must confess, finally, that I am not at all happy with the uneven roles Ezekiel allots his male and female characters. It seems hard to believe that the women are uniformly as drab, stereotyped and unimaginative as they are made out to be........... (Pandey, 1990,80).

The characters in the play are contrasting pairs; Mr. Nanda and Mrs. Nanda contrast each other. Hari and Malti have opposite roles to Mr. and Mrs. Nanda. Even Meeta and the elder son have different attitudes towards life; one lives life after all hardships, and one ends life by committing suicide. Shiela and Gopal present a contrast to another couple, Hari and Malti. They both reflect the different aspects of married
life, happy and healthy; and full of sorrows and suffering on the other hand. The only parallel character in the play is of mother and son, Mrs. Nanda and Hari, both of who are domineering in nature. Meeta and Malti show the condition of suffering women.

Ezekiel’s characters are his mouthpieces and through them he presents before us the conflicting ideologies. Characters do not grow and develop freely and naturally in the ordinary sense of the term but they exhibit a remarkable conflict of mind and soul and pave way for creative evolution.

Mr. Nanda is a man in his fifties. He is the protagonist of the play who bears all the circumstances, and the whole story revolves around him. Mr. Nanda realizes where his family has failed and in the end he also commits suicide by taking pills. His condition shows the dilemma of every sensitive soul whose nerves are always on an edge due to the paradoxes of life.

Mrs. Sathe explains that kindness alone is not enough for sensitive under achievers like the eldest son. They must be positively accepted, not charitably tolerated. When such acceptance is not forth coming they may destroy themselves in despair........ (Don’t Call it Suicide, IX).

Mr. and Mrs. Nanda contrast to each other. He is conscientious person and is unable to forget the death of his 25 year old son after fourteen years. He is unable to control his emotions and forgets the tragedy of his son’s suicide.

Nanda : It was about 14 years ago. My eldest son never did well in his exams. He never failed but he didn’t do well either. He was intelligent and very sensitive, yet somehow, he did not care at all about his school and college, we didn’t know why. He just wasn’t happy there. He complained bitterly all the time. He didn’t like most of the teachers, and he didn’t like most of
This reflects the mental state of his eldest son who is unhappy about the ways of the world. His wife is not happy with him yet he remains quiet and calm. But one day when all are out and he finds himself alone he commits suicide, leaving his wife alone to the mercy of her in-laws. Mr. Nanda has a soft corner for his daughter-in-law Meeta. She has sympathy for her and wants to give her the equal status of a family member. Mr. Nanda is not satisfied with his life as he argues with Mrs. Nanda.

Nanda: I am not satisfied to be what I am. I am not satisfied with my life as it is. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act 1, Sc 1, 7).

Mr. Nanda then gets convinced with the explanation of Mr. Sathe and commits suicide by taking pills. Thus, the play which opens against the backdrop of the elder son’s suicide ends with the father’s suicide. As K. Balachandran comments:

............The result of the totalitarianism of insensitive autocrats like Mrs. Nanda and Hari who put down ruthlessly those who oppose unable to tolerate the humiliations, Mr. Nanda consumes a whole set of pills leaving the family once for all. Is this death? No suicide only. It is the second suicide in the family against the gender inequality...... (Bhatnagar, 2001, 609).

Mr. Nanda refuses to pretend what he did not feel, and what the society commands him to feel and show. Mr. Nanda has an acute awareness of his own incapability that he is unable to counter his wife’s domineering nature.
Nanda: There are lots of things in life about which we can’t do
anything. That’s what makes is so sad. (Don’t Call it
Suicide,10)

Mr. Nanda realizes how collectively the entire family has been responsible
for their son’s suicide; his guilt, awareness of his own incompatibility and
the cruelty meted out to Meeta forces him to end his life. At the end, the
words echo.

“Ordinary people who are not like ordinary people – Some
essential kind of non-adjustment to things as they are – we
have to be close to them, close to them, close to them –
temperamentally incapable of meeting society’s standards of
success – If we provided more space for different
temperaments – more space, more space – everybody
considered him a failure and he knew it – lowing acceptance,
loving acceptance – too much to ask for – they know they can
never get, so they.........” (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act II, Sc II, 32).

Mrs. Nanda, who is a very dominating wife and very persistent person, is
the cause of the sufferings of Meeta.

In a sense, Mr. Nanda with her aggressive dominance is
responsible for creating an environment in which suicide
suggests itself as an escape from an intolerable situation. One
wonders what Mr. Sathe, that helpful psychologist –
sociologists, would have had to say at the post-mortem!..........
(Don’t Call it Suicide, XIII).

She has a very conflicting character full of love and hatred, selfishness and
selflessness, sympathetic and unsympathetic and in the end herself, a
sufferer.

Mrs. Nanda is a pragmatic person and she accepts the reality of life. She
tells her husband to forget the tragedy of the past and stops him from
Mrs. Nanda: Come on, we have to live a normal life, after all, whatever may have happened in the past. We have to think of our children and grandchildren...... Life includes suffering, but it is not all suffering...... Whatever happens, I will always do my duty. I am satisfied with my life as it is. Thank God for it... *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 7).*

Mrs. Nanda is a root cause behind the suicide of her elder son as well as for the suicide of her husband and in the end though the weak will of father and son is moreover responsible for their destiny, Mrs. Nanda breaks down:

Mrs. Nanda : ......I lost a son. Now I’ve lost my husband. What have I done to deserve this.........? *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act II, Sc III, 33).*

Mrs. Nanda’s character is marked with contrasting nature as she works as destroyer and pacifier in the family. She stops Mr. Sathe, the business acquaintance of her husband, from discussing about the suicide of her eldest son with Mr. Nanda, because it upsets him. She takes the responsibility of her children in her own hand and teaches them discipline in her own manner. She had her own way and she is always strong. She has the power to transform her husband and children; she describes the inability of her husband.

Mrs. Nanda : ......You didn’t come back because I asked you to come back. You come back because you wanted to come back. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 7).*
Mrs. Nanda: .....Your father had all kinds of silly ideas about how to treat children. I believed in teaching them discipline........  
(*Don’t Call it Suicide, ActII,Sc I,24).*

In Act II, Scene II Mrs. Nanda’s dominance and control can be seen.

In Mrs. Nanda’s view, it is the mother who must preside over the family, subordinating the father’s influence over the family. The identity of Mrs. Nanda is highly assimilative; she is representative of the orthodox Indian mother-in-law, and on the other hand domineering wife and mother.

Only education and economic independence helps a woman to encounter humiliation and dependence on others. The playwright asserts that education can empower and liberate women only when it aims at changing social attitudes. Meeta is influenced by the idea of traditional belief in morality that a woman has to live under the protection of man.

Meeta: ......What can a woman do whose husband died at the age of 25, after only two years of marriage? I don’t even have a child to love and bring up. My only consolation is that I have a home........  
(*Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,Sc II,8).*

Ezekiel himself entertains no special sympathy for Meeta ‘It would be natural to sympathies with Meeta’ he says, ‘in the tragic context of the play, but if there had been no tragedy in her life there would be nothing to evoke special feelings for her’  
(*Don’t Call it Suicide, XI)*

Further he says:

......Meeta is still appealing, she is an archetype, the suffering survivor of domestic and national disasters, with the will to continue to live her allotted span of life. One is tempted to
ask if it is not she the frail, handicapped woman, who should have committed suicide. She heroically soldiers on in life. The extraordinary feature about Meeta.............. She is a heroine without even being remotely conscious that she is one. (Don’t Call it Suicide, XI).

Ezekiel seems to convey that historical, political, socio-economic, religious and cultural factors play a great role in constructing traditional images, roles and value patterns expected from the women which are transmitted from one generation to another women, from ages, have been compromising rights and liberties for security. Ezekiel’s play positions women character in the light of this perspective and social wisdom.

Ezekiel suggests a systematic cultural reversal of values that occurred due to colonial intrusions. How Indians have been systematically infused with an idea to look down to their own myths and values. Sita and Savitri were not considered to be the highest models of morality. Malti’s character interprets the Sita Savitri cult as symbols of oppression. Malti was in perfect mutual harmony with her husband but she puts it in a derogatory sense:

Malti: I agreed with my husband because I had to agree with my husband. Otherwise, life is hell for me......... (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act1, Sc1V,19).

The women in Indian society think that if they disobey their husband their act would take them to hell and the pressure of social morality keeps them bound to home and their husband. Religion works as a regulatory force and agency to human behaviour in India.

Malti: ...... How can I get out of the house? Where can I go? What about my children? (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act1, ScIV,19).
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

The playwright shows that by the turn of last century, rapid progress in women’s education brought to the forefront a class of woman who are not meant to accept the moral and social code of the decadent male dominated society. Shiela has courage to oppose the ideas of Hari,

...............we don’t enjoy something because we have to, we enjoy it because we enjoy it, that’s all. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc IV, 18).*

Shiela proclaims her revolt by silently refusing to conform to traditional standards and attitudes of the society. She is aware of the pathetic condition of the women who silently suffers all the ill treatment. Through her character the playwright brings to our mind the contemporary woman who has her own ideas and outlook. She is not ready to surrender to the male domination. She believes the woman has her own individuality and she fights for the equality of sexes as she asserts her individuality, and becomes synonymous with the modern woman. After knowing the condition of Malti she says,

*Shiela: You have decided to do nothing about your situation, like millions of other women in our country. *(Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc IV, 19).*

This showed shift in the attitude of Indian woman and her silent assertion. Indian feminism, unlike western feminism, is duly oriented and value based approach to achieve man-woman camaraderie and partnership.

Shiela wants Malti to break the walls of psychological imprisonment located inside, which cannot be broken merely by going outside the walls of patriarchal homes. Through her character, Ezekiel displays how women have become conscious of their neglected status and position in the
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

home, and how there has emerged a spirit of rebellion among them to protest against the oppressive world of men. She becomes the representative of the modern women in the play.

Hari is a replica of his mother, an insensitive autocrat and a male chauvinist. Hari ignores the advice of Shiela and tell him not to spoil relationship with his wife. Actually he doesn’t want to improve his relationship. In his professional life Hari learns that to be strong is to win. In his personal as well professional life he was dominating with his male chauvinism. Hari says:

Hari: In this world you win, if you are strong, not if you are right. That is why; I don’t allow anybody to boss over me........... I have found that if I don’t boss over them, then they boss over me, every one of them including my wife. (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActII,ScI,24).

Mrs. Nanda: Wah, wah you are a strong man. That is a good thing.

Hari: Exactly I am strong because I have to be. That is the nature of the world. What else can I do? (Don’t Call it Suicide,ActII,ScI,25).

Mr. Sathe becomes the catalyst for the suicide of Mr. Nanda. He wants to give Mr. Nanda sympathy by discussing the tragedy of his elder son’s suicide but his understanding of the situation forces Mr. Nanda to create tragedy one more time. He explains Mr. Nanda why his son committed suicide.

Mr. Sathe is an unwelcome visitor. He is an unwilling catalyst, psychologist-cum-sociologist. His suggestion provokes Mr. Nanda to commit suicide who finds in him (Mr. Sathe) objective about everything, thoughtful and sensible.
Ezekiel uses very appropriate and straightforward diction in the play. English spoken by the characters is basically Indian English. Language can be used in an emotive, evocative and symbolic way and the language of the characters is marked by an appropriate register they employ certain features of sound, grammar, lexis etc. in everyday life. Every character uses language according to a particular situation like in the argument between Mrs. Nanda and Mr. Nanda or the conversation at the dinners, monologue of Meeta, Hari & Mrs. Nanda.

Nanda: Nothing our guests should be here soon.
Nanda: Hello, hello, come in.
Shiela: How's everybody, how's everything?
Mrs. Nanda: ..........why not come straight to the table, all of you? That will save me the trouble of serving you drinks. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, ActI, ScII,14).

Mrs. Nanda: Come on, come on, take your seats, I’ll bring in the food, all of you serve yourselves. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, ActI, ScII,15).

Ezekiel picks up the language from daily life and employs the language which is spoken in India. He uses everyday colloquial Indian English language; the dialogue in the play capture Indianness:

Nanda: We did our best to help him. He didn’t seem to appreciate it – never mind that. After he got his B.A., he told us he didn’t want to go in for his M.A. We said alright, we are not tyrants. My second son and my daughter were doing very well in their exams. Infact, my second son got high second class in his B.A., and later my daughter got first class. Her marriage was arranged with a very successful business executive. My second son also made a good match. Both are quite happy. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, ActI, ScI,14).
It will be quite pertinent to quote the words of Bijay Kumar Das in this context. He says,

\[
\text{Ezekiel's greatest contribution lies in making the English language able to carry the weight of his Indian experience and at the same time keeping it fit to communicate with the English speaking world.} \quad (\text{Bharucha, 1998, 130}).
\]

Mr. Nanda’s English is non-descript and uninfluenced. There are various shades of Indian English that are used by common men but the English which is spoken by Mr. Nanda changes sometime. He suddenly lapses into Indian English. Like Mr. Nanda, other characters also give a spark of Indianism in their dialogue. The language employed by the playwright is emotive, creative and able to convey a complex vision and elusive meaning more effectively. In an interview Ezekiel suggests about the language of Mr. Nanda.

\[
\text{Ezekiel: No because after all if you meet half a dozen Nandas, each will have his own level of acquaintance with the language and each will also have something in common with the other Nandas. So I have to create a character who is so to speak 'acceptable'. That this is the way he is going to speak. He should not suddenly speak as if he is an English man or an American.} \quad (\text{Patel, www.mumbaitheatreguide.com})
\]

Another noticeable feature of Ezekiel’s language or style is the use of Hindi words. These words reflect the poet’s observation of a native language and show the real life situations in our country and typical Indian English spoken by a particular class in our country. The influence of Indian English can be traced through the use of vocabulary. At certain point the words used by the characters have influence of Indian language
Don't Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre and Ezekiel displays his knowledge of Indian terms through the use of Indian words.

‘Alright, baba, I won’t say anything. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc.6).

The word ‘Pallu’ and ‘saree’ as ‘Her face is half covered with the Pallu of the white saree hiding her head. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc. 8).

The word ‘baba’ which is Indian, ‘wah, wah’ you are a strong man. Further the way Mrs. Nanda talks.

..........Arre, what hospitality, vospitality? (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act II, Sc. II, 31).

The playwright’s use of typical language, jargons, catch phrases, brings his drama appear real. These phrases or words show the playwright’s ability to make his play more acceptable and make the audience and reader more comfortable with the language so that they can easily correlate themselves and get the full ethos and essence of the play. The dialogue contain in them shrewd knowledge of men, women and their real condition. In one of the interview with Tony Patel, Ezekiel talks about the language of the characters:

Ezekiel: .......If I have created a character called Mr. Nanda, then Mr. Nanda has to speak the way he would in real life and I have to get a grip on that kind of English....... (Patel, www.mumbaitheatreguide.com)

The language or the dialogues are according to the needs of the characters. All the characters are modern, and they speak the language which suits them in reality.
Ezekiel made use of dramatic irony at many levels. Irony can be found out in the way Mr. Nanda and his son-in-law discuss cruelty on a large scale. They both discuss about cruelty and inhumanity. But they are blind to the same inhumanity and cruelty in their own home.

Mr. Nanda's suicide evokes one more irony in the play as Mr. Sathe wants to help Mr. Nanda by discussing his elder son's death and by giving him suggestion, but ironically it proves to be the instrument of the final tragedy. There is irony in the way Mr. Nanda talks with Mrs. Nanda. As Mrs. Nanda tries to solve the problem of Mr. Nanda by discussing it. Mr. Nanda ironically asks her:

........ Which problem have we ever solved by discussing it?........
(Don't Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 6).

Along with the spoken words, body gestures are also important factors which signify the meaning. The movement of hand, head and facial expression more conveniently expresses the mood of the character. Mr. Nanda looks sad and suddenly bursts into a loud sobs, his sudden reaction reminds him of the suicide of his son. Another is, Mr. Nanda stares at Mrs. Nanda, but he gives no sign giving 'affectionate look', 'making a helpless gesture with his hands'; further Mr. Nanda 'bows his head, the picture of abject misery' the gesture of picking up a plate and striking it with a ladle, putting head down on the knees, placing head in cupped hand and in the end. Ezekiel keeps in mind the stage performance and directs the actors to convey the meaning:

(Meeta, who has come in and stood aghast at the sight, now comes forward and puts her arms comfortingly round the sobbing woman, who is kneeling beside the sofa. Mrs. Nanda turns round and clutches Meeta) (Don't Call it Suicide, Act II, Sc III, 33).
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

Thus the gestures are more powerful than the words. They convey the meaning more effectively than spoken words. Tone, which is another factor, gives the idea about our conception, attitude personal relationship, and mood towards the audience. The tone can be critical, approving, formal, outspoken, playful, arrogant, angry, loving, serious, and ironic according to the relationship or the attitude with the listener. In the play, the tone of the characters reveals their attitude towards the other person. As in the beginning, the tone of Mr. Sathe is measured but Mr. Nanda ‘speaks spasmodically’ as if he is struggling to control his emotions. Their tone expresses their state of mind further he submissiveness in the tone of the female characters—laughing, talking firmly is also a form of tone which gives idea about the speaker. Ezekiel’s conscious employment of the non-native diction to become acceptable in Indian theatres can be realized through the play. Further in the play she says:

Mrs. Nanda: ...... why he should turn up again after a mouth I can’t understand. We were peaceful without him. You must promise not to discuss our son’s death with Mr. Sathe. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act II, Sc II, 26).

Rising of voice is a sign of revolt or disagreement as the tone of Mrs. Nanda shows

Mrs. Nanda: No, no the dishes can’t be washed later. We have to put out the lights. We can’t let the electricity bill becomes bigger and bigger. As it is. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 11)
In the play we find that all the characters talk in a particular tone showing politeness, hopelessness, anger, submissiveness, etc. The tone of Mrs. Nanda suggests as if she is talking to an idiot child.

Thus all these examples explain how the tone of the speaker expresses his or her attitude and relationship, with the audience or listener. In the play many characters talk to themselves. It denotes the convention by which a character, alone on the stage utters his or her thoughts aloud. Also there are short speeches by the characters which expresses to the audience thought or intention. In the beginning, Mr. Nanda’s long dialogue in which he describes his eldest son.

In scene two the long speech which appears to be a soliloquy is delivered by Meeta in which she addresses the audience and describes her life.

Meeta: He was a very good husband in every way, always treated me very well never said that he was unhappy, didn’t talk much, but when he did he was always nice. Some people think his parents didn’t treat us well because I was non-matric and he had no prospects .......... only little food and some clothes, and shelter somewhere. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 8).

The playwright has used this device as a convenient way to convey informations about a character’s motive and state of mind or for purposes of exposition, and sometimes in order to guide the judgments and responses of the audience.

As Prof. Anisur Rehman writes in T.R.Sharma’s Essays of Nissim Ezekiel,
Ezekiel is capable of turning the abstract into concrete. Infusing sound into a sense, he can transmute drama through words. (Sharma, 1995,260).

Ezekiel uses soliloquy as a dramatic device. Hari also addresses the audience but his speech is more of a soliloquy in which he describes about his elder brother and his sensitive behaviour. His thinking is functional.

**Hari:** I was 22 when my elder brother died. To most people, he seemed quite ordinary. I often had that view of him but not always. From time to time he would say or do something very peculiar. I suppose one could call him sensitive, but it was a very strange kind of sensitiveness.... Once I remember my elder brother was crying. He had seen a beggar child who was very pretty and also blind. So what? There are so many blind beggars all around us, and some child beggars too who are blind and pretty. So what? We can’t afford to be sentimental about such things still, on the whole, my elder brother was a nice person, really nice..... *(Don’t Call it Suicide,ActI,ScIII,13).*

The playwright intentionally uses the device of soliloquy or aside to give detailed description about the character’s background, their behavior and state of mind. Their speeches reveal the characters’ motives and their inner feelings and ideas and thought about the other character which helps the audience or the reader. This is a method which is implied by the traditional playwright to show the ideas of the character. Ezekiel uses this device in his modern play with a different technical import and design to convey meaning.
STAGE SETTING

KEY:

Area A = SB - Side Board
  C - Dining Chairs
  T - Dining Table
Area B = S - Sofa
  TP - Teapoy
Area C = L - Lounge chairs
Area D = CS - Centre Spot for soliloquies
  L - Left Entrance
  R - Right Exit

Lightening, Only one area to be illuminated at a time.
  Baby spot on Area D (Don’t Call it Suicide, 2).
Ezekiel uses many theatrical devices in the play Ezekiel’s aim was not to convey only thoughts and feelings of individuals but through the drama, he wants to show realism and truth which displays, with other features, human emotion and experience and also explores the terrifying possibilities of human existence. In this context, it will be quite pertinent to quote the words from Bharata’s *Natyashastra*.

Theatre is life. There’s no art, no craft, no learning, no yoga, no action which cannot be seen in it. (Rangacharya, 1971, 35).

The stage is divided according to the need of the situation. In the center the dining table and chairs are placed where all the characters meet for the dinner. For the entrance and exit of the characters, there are two separate ways the left entrance and right exit. The area B has the sofa and teapoy which makes the character separate from the others. In the area C there are two lounge chairs where Malti and Sheila discussed their problem and in the centre, in area D, there is a centre spot for soliloquy where characters stand in front of the audience and share ideas with them. The sitting is divided into these areas according to the situation and need of the character. Some time characters are alone, with other character or with all the family members. Only one area is illuminated at a time to put emphasis on the particular area and particular situation, thus the stage setting is according to the demand of the play.

Among other things is light, which is effectively used in all the plays of Ezekiel. As in *Don’t Call it Suicide*, the stage light is used to describe the setting and action. The effect of light interprets the action on the stage. The function of light is to bring about assimilation of the sets, the stage floor and the actors. Light shifts from bright to dim according to the situation. In the beginning of Act-I Scene II before Meeta gives her
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre

soliloquy the light becomes dim and ‘she stands in the beam of a spotlight’. The beam of spotlight makes the sari glow which reveals that she is a widow wearing white sari and is going to express something serious about her life and her condition; as Meeta leaves the stage, the lights fade. The entry of another character is made with the lightning on the stage again. Further the scene three begins with a dim light ‘The stage is bathed in a dim light’ again Hari is on the beam of spotlight and delivers a soliloquy. The lightning effect reveals the audience about the coming situation and helps in making a suitable atmosphere and again the ‘lights fade slowly as Hari leaves the stage, then comes on again.’ In Act II Scene one ‘The stage is in semi-darkness’ and a ‘faint spotlight shines’ on Mr. Nanda. ‘As he speaks slowly the spotlight grows to its usual luminance’. Mrs. Nanda talks in a very conversational tone of a woman. Thus light is very effective stage device. In the end, ‘a very dim light’ which reflects the gloom on the stage or that some sort of serious action is going to take place on the stage as Mr. Nanda appears with a torch and commits suicide and Mrs. Nanda enters and ‘Switches on the lights’. Thus among other thing light expresses before the audience the sense of situation and action.

Costume is another important factor which helps in describing the mood, situation and time. In Act one Scene two, Meeta is shown wearing a white sari ‘Her face is half covered with the pallu of the white saree hiding her head’. It shows she is a widow and the particular way of putting pallu expresses the culture too, traditional Indian culture where widows are supposed to cover sari on their head and their faces are not visible. Thus, the dress is specific symbol for defining the culture of a particular place, and further, in Act two Scene two, the time span is displayed by warm
clothes of Mr. and Mrs. Nanda which indicate the arrival of winter, and that a month has elapsed.

Ezekiel uses many devices like irony, satire and ridicule to depict the hypocrisy and shams of the society and realities as he experiences around him. The play appeals to the Indian audience as they can relate and feel the tragic condition and emotion of the protagonists as well as the other suffering characters.

............Through this very impressive, evocative tragedy, Nissim Ezekiel with the social awareness, especially for the middle class, emphasizes the need for freedom, tolerance and understanding for a happy, peaceful and domestic life which has to be lived fully and not to be ended half way through by committing suicide. (Bhatnagar,2001,609).

Ezekiel clarifies that every encounter is for a good change and modernity is also for a good social order. He leaves the decision to the readers—whether they want to choose the happy married life like Gopal and Shiela, or want to live like Mrs. Nanda or be like Meeta, Hari, Mr. Nanda, Malti or the elder son who committed suicide. It is up to the reader or the audience to interpret the theme in their own ways. Ezekiel admits in an interview with Zubin Driver

I don’t think there is any plan of mine that could influence anybody. Don’t call it suicide did have a strong sociological message— the play was based on a true incident that I had heard of in Pune. (Anklesaria,2008,64).

Thus, the play reflects a fine blending of tradition and modernity at different levels. It is a modern play but has conventional themes, ideas and technique which make the play close to the experiences of ordinary people. The modern writing trends include journalistic fiction and other related forms too. This incident based plot refers to a type of drama that
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre has a current situational response to the issues and complexities of contemporary life. The play can register its claim as a ‘period piece’ and a cultural document in Indian writing in English.
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Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre


CHAPTER VI

Conclusion
The tradition of Indian drama is preserved in the *Natyashastra*, the oldest text on the theory of drama. The traditional account in the *Natyashastra* gives a divine origin to Indian theatre, attributing it to the *Natyaveda*, the holy book of dramaturgy created by Lord Brahma. *Natyashastra* contains in detail a description of about the composition, production and aesthetic appeal of ancient drama, also a wealth of information of types of drama, music, dance stage equipment and production. The *Natyashastra* gives a detailed description of all the aspects of art of acting, especially hand gestures and body movements. A study of the background of Indian drama is a relative feature to express traditionally-oriented modern worldview. Indian theatre is both idiomatically heterogeneous and polyglot in character. Also dance drama, mime, song instrumentation, puppetry and orally delivered narrative, all combine almost seamlessly in a performance by an ensemble of artist working simultaneously. Traditional Indian drama seems to be connected with religion from the time of its origin. It is associated with the gods. It was performed as an act of worship and watched as act of devotion.

Like their Greek and Elizabethan counterparts, Indian playwrights writing in Sanskrit literature borrowed extravagantly from history and legends for their plot construction. Writers find this rich tradition an inexhaustible source of story, plot and music. Works of Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath
Conclusion

Tagore, Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sircar are influenced by this rich tradition of Sanskrit plays. To get the maximum output from his drama and to create a lasting impact by sense, subject, plot, character, dialogue and tradition the playwright has to use these elements properly and fulfil the needs of drama and audience.

The classical Sanskrit tradition has to be tailored to meet modern needs. The contemporary playwrights incorporate ancient tales and myths, folk tales and conventions in their plays. Modern theatre in India started for the middle class and upper middle class. It is an urban phenomenon and developed in urban cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai). Drama became a weapon for social and political reforms. Drama got a specific direction with the establishment of the National School of Drama in 1960s. Nissim Ezekiel, the father of post-independence Indian verse in English, was a poet, critic and playwright. Though the present study concentrates on the plays of Nissim Ezekiel, yet one can trace a subtle thematic unity of traditional and modern experiment fervour. His plays are also a contribution to the modern techniques of theatre and theoretical tradition of Indian drama. Ezekiel believed that plays were written for performance and not only for reading; as such it must have a strong theatrical element. His plays are a reflection of the problems of modern urban civilisation and display the trivialities, permissiveness, consumerism and absurdities of their existence. The use of comic and satiric elements, irony, wit and humour make his plays appear more real to the recipients. His plays focus on his sharp observation of the oddities of human life and behaviour; they
provide glimpses of a cross-section of contemporary society. His drama is realistic and shows the real facets of human life.

Ezekiel’s most interesting play ‘Nalini’ is a three act comedy. It reflects the unauthentic state of the complex life of metropolitan middle class men and women. The play is an interesting social satire which presents a contrast between dream and reality, the ethereal and the substantial. It depicts the unauthentic life of two modern advertising executives Bharat and Raj. Ezekiel dramatises the real condition of contemporary life style and mindset of Bharat and Raj and their farcical existence which is full of meaninglessness and bare ideas. Ezekiel employs satire as a powerful weapon thereby presenting an alarming pragmatic picture of present day India. He makes use of wit and satire to expose the conceit of urban middle class. The play oscillates from reality to fantasy and finally ends at the note of reality. ‘Nalini’ is beautiful blend of the old and the new, dream and reality and the traditional and modernistic value system, and of all those contraries which constitute the present day human life of complexities and difficulties. The play depicts conventional modes and discusses the myth of ‘Sitas and Savitris’ and relates it to the character of modern Nalini. This presents to the recipients of the play a fusion of the modern and the traditional woman. The play deals with post-colonial experiences and the themes of identity crisis and shift in values. Ezekiel is conscious of the tensions between the cultural and the colonial past of India, between the attractions of the western modes of thought and the Indian tradition.

The issue of effect and aftermath of the colonial rule on a country’s future economic, social and cultural development. As such there exists among
the modern civilisation a ‘nostalgic idealisation’ of the native Indian tradition and values and a ‘compulsive urge’ for modernity and western modes of living. In fact, Ezekiel’s own sensibility is a fusion of the two cultures. He has double impulse of being a native and an alien and he belongs to the period of transition in which the values of modernism paved the way for post-modernism in India. Nalini is an independent woman who is conscious of her dignity, values and moralities. She rejects the romantic advances of Bharat and exposes him. The play has a modern urban setting, characters belonging to same section of contemporary middle class having modern attitude, references to mythological characters claiming one’s own past, departure from the past and projection of contemporary values are the highlights of the play. The influence of urbanization and excessive modernisation is felt among the urban civilisation and the quest for identity is a post-modernist trend. Such modern themes of identity crisis, alienation, hollowness, interior or existential conflict and disillusionment have been dealt in the plays of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel’s short-length plays ‘Marriage Poem’ and ‘The Sleepwalkers’ also depict a smooth blend of tradition and modernity. The playwright strikes a balance between the conventional and contemporary elements at the level of themes and dramatic techniques. The ‘Marriage Poem’ reveals the dark and bright sides of the institution of marriage. The couple Mala and Naresh belong to upper middle class section of society. The playwright is about a situation, a perfunctory domestic situation and depicts the failure of their marriage in which the wife and husband nag and love. The themes of an unhappy marriage and man-woman relationship have been dealt at length in this particular play. Mala and
Conclusion

Naresh live under the same roof, experience emptiness, loneliness and a sense of alienation. Naresh tells Leela, the other woman in his life, that he loves her but at the same time he is well aware of the fact that has a family too. The superficial nature of marital relationship can be predicted through the dramatization of dream-like entrance and exit of the other woman, Leela. Though Mala experiences her husband’s emotional indifference, callousness and bitter negligence, yet like a typical Indian housewife she is extremely sensitive to the traditional norms of morality and reminds her husband of the marital duties. At the same time she is modern in her outlook, and bold and assertive in her manners, and leaves no stone unturned to win her husband back. Naresh is caught in the crossfire of marital loyalty and romantic love. He is self-contradictory and oscillates between the reality of his marital duties and his fantasy for Leela. Thus Ezekiel presents a very realistic picture of the present day urban Indian society.

Similarly, another play ‘The Sleepwalkers’ satirises the nature of Indians who always praise and accept the superiority of the Americans. The American couple is shown in an interaction with the Indian guests trying to promote their magazine. A contemporary study of Indian and American lifestyle, beliefs, diction, and culture and value system is portrayed with a blend of Western theatrical modes of opera with an excessive use of sound, light, music and masks effect.

Ezekiel’s another play ‘Song of Deprivation’ discusses the plight of the modern young lovers He and She who are bound by the conventions and restrictions of the Indian society. They are unnamed characters in the play. The entire play is in the form of telephonic conversation. The
Conclusion

concepts of urbanization, excessive modernization and technological means, and how these gadgets affect the quality of life of the modern man have been the focus of the play. The action lacks rapidity and pace that is why different background sound effects of transistor, teleprinter and bell are used to substitute the physical action on the stage.

Nissim Ezekiel's 'Don't Call it a Suicide', a tragedy in two acts, is another specimen of the blend of the tradition and modernity. The play centres around the family of Mr. Nanda and the case of the suicide of his eldest son. It is a domestic tragedy of death, guilt, remorse and atonement. The playwright has voiced the typical modernist's disregard for Indian conventions and prejudices. The playwright deals with the ordinary people, their day to day life, relationships and frustrations, and he expects the recipients to recognise and identify themselves with the modern man struggling with a life full of dilemma. The play reveals the pathetic plight of the family of Mr. Nanda and deals with such themes as alienation, modernity, condition of women, human predicament, violence, insecurity, fear and dilemma.

A close examination of Nissim Ezekiel's plays reveals that there is a skilful and perfect use of ironical fantasy in almost all of his plays. Some important themes that he takes up are related to the city life, politics, loneliness, love, sexuality and similar human situations. Ezekiel's selection of theme, art of characterization, choice of western theatrical devices, deliberate expression of post-colonial diction and a blend of urban and rural Indian settings establishes his plays into a wider global perspective. Indian English drama attains glory, validity and vitality through consistent attempts of playwrights like Nissim Ezekiel who add their western insights
Conclusion

and Indian vision to relocate the identity of Indian English theatre. His dramas are realistic and show the real facets of human life.

The same person is behind the plays as behind the poetry. If there are differences, the careful reader of both will discover and comment on them. (Sharma, 1995, 32).

He has contributed in different fields and made drama more enriched by his new ideas and techniques. Kaiser Haq comments on Ezekiel’s plays:

Of Ezekiel’s other works, his plays have had a mixed reception, but probably deserve more attention than they have so far received. They are rather Shavian in their preoccupation with ideas, and in the absence of Shavian wit do not make for very successful theatre. . . . . . . . (Haq, 2004, www.dailystar.net).

Thus, his plays provide a new hope for the Indian Drama in English due to their freshness and use of new experiments in technique.
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