CHAPTER V

Don't Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd
Theatre Form to Indian Theatre
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.
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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, relationship 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
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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).
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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
something very peculiar. I suppose one could call him sensitive, but it was a very strange kind of sensitiveness, a hopeless kind, you may say ..... (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Scene 13).

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*, ActII Scene 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, 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,

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 4).

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

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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 and 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).
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
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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, Scene 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:

Nanda: Quite right. Human beings remain human beings, whatever happens (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Scene III, 15).

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, Scene 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
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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, Sc I, 19).

The plight of Maiti 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. Maiti accepts the inferior position to her husband.

Maiti: ....... 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, Sc I, 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, Sc I, 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 Maiti. 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:

...... 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).

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 Multi 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
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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.
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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, ActI,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?
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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 inhumanity we see in ordinary, everyday life. (*Don’t Call it Suicide*, Act I, Sc III, 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 I, Sc IV, 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 I, 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, ActI, ScI,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, ActI, ScIII,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
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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
certain 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 V, 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 V, 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 V, 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...
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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 a 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 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 I, Sc. II, 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 a mounts 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
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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, Act I, Sc I, 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
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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, p.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 Shiela 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 Shiela 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, ActI, ScIV, 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, ActI, ScII, 19)*.

Mrs. Nanda is *persecutor*. Like a persecutor she has anger and ill feeling for Meeta, her daughter-in-law, whom she treats as 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.
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,Sc II,10)*.

Mrs. Nanda: You forget that Meeta also has to eat in the
kitchen after dinner. *(Don’t Call it Suicide,
ActI,Sc II,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,Sc II,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,Sc III,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 clutchess 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:
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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, ActI, ScII, 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
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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 group. On 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
Don’t Call it Suicide: An Application of the Absurd Theatre Form to Indian Theatre 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 forthcoming 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
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the students, though he had two or three good friends. (Don’t Call it Suicide, Act I, Sc I, 14).

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 I, Sc I, 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, ActII,ScII,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, Act II, Sc 1, 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, Act I, Sc 1, 8).

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

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).
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, Act I, Sc IV, 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, Act I, Sc IV, 19).
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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,Actl,SclV,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,Actl,SclV,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
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 Sheila and tells 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, Act II, Sc I, 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, Act II, Sc I, 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, Act I, Scene 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, Act I, Scene 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, Act I, Scene 14).
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It will be quite pertinent to quote the words of Bijay Kumar Das in this context. He says,

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........ (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.

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. (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.
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 I, 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 II, 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.mumbaiteatreguide.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. *Example:* 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).*
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, ActII, ScII, 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, ActI, ScII, 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, ActI,ScII,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, Act I, Sc III, 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 traditional device in his modern play with a different technical import and design to convey meaning.
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).
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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
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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
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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 experience 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
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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.
REFERENCES


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