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
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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
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
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.
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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.
Conclusion

REFERENCES
