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,

*I have not yet written plays substantial enough to be considered in terms of bad good, better, best and worst*
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compared to the other three Nalini and Marriage Poem I consider worth staging........... (Reddy,1990,15).

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 unforgottably powerful on the stage. There are only three characters in the play. It has a tautly knit structure with a good
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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 I, 9).**

**Bharat: Men are never saints with women (Nalini, Act I, 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
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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, Act.1,11).

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, Act.1,15).

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, Act.1,16)

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, ActII, 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, ActIII, 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, ActII, 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
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woman within me, who must one day become me............. (Nalini, Act II, 43).

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,
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First step towards a post perspective is to reclaim one’s own past. (Barry, 2007, 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 I, 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, 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.
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, Actl, 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, Actl, 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, Actl, 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,Act1,12).
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, Act I, 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, Act I, 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, Act III, 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,

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,

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.

\[\text{.........I’m not an intellectual. I’m not an artist. I have no caste, no community, no nationality, no culture, no morality.........you can’t wipe me out. you cancel me out. (Nalini,ActII,38).}\]

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,

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

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,


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, Act II, 38).*

Ezekiel also depicts the reality of the colonial consequence on the life style 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, Act II, 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, Act III, 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:

..............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 colonialist ideology. Hence, Fanon’s theory is fully applicable to the play Nalini:

..............First step for colonised 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).
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 I, 10).

According to Edward Said,

............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*).

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 I, 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.

*Nalini*: ..........Every time I created a painting, I created myself............ (*Nalini*, Act II, 40).

*Bharat*: ........I can’t understand art but I can understand artist............ (*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, ActI,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, ActII,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, ActII,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, ActII,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
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.
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 speaks through his characters who have double personalities in their public life and inner life........... (Pandey, 1990,40).

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.mumbaithetreguide.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.mumbaithetreguide.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, p. 30).

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
the literate part of an illiterate city............
(Nalini, Act1, 15).

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, Act 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, Act 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, Act 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,Act1,16).

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,Act1,17).

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,Act1,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*, Act I, 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 weaknesses .......... (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,ActI,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,ActII,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 off 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,ActII,41).

Nalini’s creative urge is expressed when she admits:

Nalini: It is freedom, which includes the freedom to create something new........ (Nalini,ActII,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,ActII,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,ActIII,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, ActI,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
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 identity 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*, ActIII,51).

Again in the end they said,

Raj: And don’t ring that blasted bell again. (*Nalini*, ActIII,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*, ActIII,52).

Raj: ...............when a bell rings that loudly, things are out of control.

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, Act III, 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, Act I,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, Act III, 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*, ActIII, 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*, ActI, 22).

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*, ActII, 25).

..........She’s an independent woman, with the intelligence of a man and the determination of an orthodox Indian mother in law........... (*Nalini*, ActIII, 45).

Nalini has her own ideas about life and art. Bharat says,
I appreciate what I’ve got. It’s 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,ActIII,47).*

> We sit down quietly, and will her to come *(Nalini,ActIII,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,ActIII,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,ActIII,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 repeat 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.
Bharat: The first one. *(Nalini, Act III, 48)*.

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.
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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