CHAPTER IV

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

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

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

The title of the play is very appropriate and suggestive.

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

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

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

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

SHE: ........without freedom, how can I live? And unless I live how can I find out what living is? (Anklesaria,2008,171).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further,
SHE: My light blue Sari, the one you like. I feel a different woman in it.
HE: What do you mean?
SHE: Not the woman in the bikini, you know not the naked woman beneath my clothes. A different woman altogether.
HE: You’re the social creature now, my dear, the woman in the all covering sari. (Anklesaria, 2008, 169).
SHE: I know.
HE: Not the real you.
SHE: Exactly
HE: That’s how things are, honey.
SHE: I have to pretend all the time.
HE: It’s not pretence. It’s just a different role.
SHE: Anyway, I prefer the other role, the girl in the bikini. (Anklesaria, 2008, 170).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

......... He relates himself to modern India in a certain way because not being a Hindu, he can neither identity himself
Ezekiel is a modern playwright as he deals with current subjects and immediate surroundings. His plays are based in Bombay and its rootlessness, dehumanization of modern life or with the environment of social estrangement. The theme of hollowness and emptiness runs throughout the play ‘Song of Deprivation’. The character of He and She are portrayed as young lovers and through them Ezekiel points out the futility of the youth who are empty from within and have no real values within them. They live in their own imaginative world and hesitate to face the society. They want to live in the world of their own fantasy without any outside interruption. Their emptiness can be predicted through the dialogue of He, as he is merely interested in physical love.

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

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

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

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

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

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

They also reveal their past sensational experience where She reminds him of their train journey, and her leaning on him in a crowded train:

SHE: From time to time, as you swayed in the moving train, you pressed against me.......... (Anklesaria, 2008, 165).

The characters, He and She are of same taste and sentiment as they dance and enjoy together to the light, popular rhythmic volume of the music. Ezekiel displays through the character of She that, in the changing socio-economic scenario educated Indian women are no longer ready to tolerate any kind of exploitation. They are conscious of their demands and struggle for the fulfillment of these demands. Ezekiel mocks at the double standard of the life of She. She leads a double life, has double standards and even the double tongue for her and other for the society. She pretends all the time. She looks romantic as long as she wears bikini but after wearing the sari she becomes a social creature. Through her character the playwright laughs at the double standards of the people.

Towards the end of the play She delivers a long dialogue which reveals the criticism of modern life, that how girls are brought up in India and they are devoid of freedom. For them the world is like a prison house where they cannot have freedom to lead their life in their own way. She has the insatiable thirst for living and life as she said,

SHE: Without freedom, how can I live! Unless I live how can I find out what living is?
HE: ......You want freedom and that’s what people are afraid of, aren’t they? One freedom leads to another, and it all leads up to sexual freedom, doesn’t it? (Anklesaria, 2008, 171).

The conversations between He and She are very meaningful and seem logical and interesting. The playwright depicts the fact that in the play the individual cannot avoid society, and one cannot escape from the clutches of society. SHE is ready to leave them, but they are not ready to leave her alone. Ezekiel’s characters work as his mouthpiece as they pronounce the playwright’s point of view in a distinctive manner. Ezekiel laughs at the character and through them, at the hypocrisy of the world. Though there is not much action in the play yet the long speech and dialogue grasp our attention. However at the end She and He are together and they are not bothered about the society.

The gadgets like telephone and the radio and the machines are the medium through which the playwright displays the artificiality of the modern man’s existence. It is merely a reflection of modern life and how the lovers’ life is incomplete without these two, which appear to be the helpers of the lovers.

The play focuses on the fact that the life of modern man becomes a question, the conversation, between He and She are in the form of question most of the time. In the present society life is like an interrogation mark. Man is always in search of an answer:

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

SHE: Has the audience left? (Anklesaria, 2008, 173).


The title of the play is suggestive of the theme of deprivation. It reflects how He and She are prevented from having things that they long for. She lists the dos and the don’ts.

Ezekiel brings forward the stark realities of life, that sometimes this dos and don’ts are better for a decent society. He attacks the social customs, religion, religious practices, giving undue importance to food, the lifestyle of elders who treat their children and bring them up in the same way.

She is a representative of the modern woman Ezekiel tries to transform this image of woman by portraying her in a more realistic manner. Through She’s character; he depicts a bold woman of the middle class society. She is a representative of the contemporary Indian women. She displays independence, self-assertiveness and skepticism but She is also extremely sensitive to the traditional norms of morality. When She appears on the stage, dressed in a bikini, she is without makeup, long loose hair, barefooted. She is playing a transistor and listening to music and she receives the call of her lover. Throughout the play, She is presented in a restless mood, as if she is dissatisfied and wants to do something else. The gesture of She displays her state of mind as she keeps on moving her hands and feet and changes position. She drags the telephone wire. This all explains the excitement and restlessness of She.

She fidgets about, shifts from foot to foot, kicks up her legs, moves all over the room drags the lengthy telephone wire
with her, and occasionally gets entangled in it. (Anklesaria, 2008, 158).

She is presented to be as a modern young lover who is unable to meet in reality and makes love on telephone. She has a restlessness to meet He. They waste their time in imagining and pretending. The character of She is a blend of both tradition and modernity. As a modern woman she voice her feelings and experiences freely but at the sometime remains confined of the traditions and connections of her society. She is a modern woman, strongly aware of her rights, individualistic in outlook but also constrained by the forces of tradition which chain and holds her back. The playwright displays how the society becomes the obstruction in the lovers’ life and encroaches upon their privacy. She’s grandmother, the servants and the eggman are the representatives of the society.

The playwright presents that modern youth is more influenced by the sexual side of love. Love for them is something else as the dialogues of She represent.

HE: If I come over, will you let me close the door? (Anklesaria, 2008, 161).

She has a double personality, one for her own self and the other for the society. Here Ezekiel brings to our mind the idea of identity crisis which occurs in the mind of the Indian youth and the unauthentic life of man who has no real worth. She is presented in the bikini which she wears after her grandmother leaves for town while She is alone in the house. This reflects that it is the boundation of the society which forces a woman to pretend all the time. The character of She is ultramodern, as She loves
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to wear bikini, enjoys music and talks confidently on sex with He. She says,

SHE: I’m beautifully dirty......
SHE: You undress me......
SHE: I lie down naked and bathed in perspiration
....(Anklesaria, 2008,162).

She is not like traditional women who have certain boundations. She has a modern outlook and ideas. She says:

SHE: I’m lying down naked, well, almost, and I’m not bathed in perspiration but imagine that I am. Go on. Don’t you undress? (Anklesaria,2008,162).

The play can also be seen as deconstructing idealized images of the Indian woman. There is no ideal Indian woman as such, apart from the real flesh and blood women. She also reminds He about their last experience in the train:

SHE : Remember last week in the train?
SHE : From time to time, as you swayed in the moving train, you pressed against me. (Anklesaria, 2008,164).

Through the character of She the playwright shows the fascination of modern youth for the phone as well as for music, as She again and again switches on the transistor which is with her all the time:

HE: You spend too much time listening to that transistor.
HE: What have you been doing all morning?
SHE: ....Listening to the transistor. (Anklesaria,2008,166).

She is caught between the discourses of personal freedom on the one hand and those of social norms and traditions on the other. At the same
time she is aware of the fact that it was next to impossible for the two lovers to meet and fulfill their physical desires. The conversation below suggests that the modern lovers live in the world of imagination and get pleasure out of that.

**HE**: I wish we could meet today.

**SHE**: No use starting that all over again. We can’t, and that’s that (Anklesaria, 2008, 166).

The limit of imagination can be predicted when she imagines to be tickle by he and laugh on the phone.

**HE**: OK I’m tickling you

**SHE**: (Laughing outrageously and pretending she is tickled).......... (Anklesaria, 2008, 168).

Ezekiel shows that on the one hand She is unable to shake off the influence of these patriarchal subjugating discourses, while on the other hand She vehemently asserts her individuality, defends her personal freedom and the right of the body. Through She, Ezekiel wants to drag the idea of gender consciousness which is rooted in the India society. Girls and boys are differentiated from their time of birth and She is also conscious of this fact when She says:

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

The society with its moral codes and restrictions is therefore already housed in She’s consciousness. We see in She’s personality a conflict between the real and the performed. The sudden transformation can be seen in the character of She not only as the transformation of her dress, ideas and thought. She appears in sari which is a symbol of the Indian
dress and reflects culture and tradition. She is tied down by the oppressive constraints of the label of Indianness that is imposed on her by the self-styled guardians of social norms and cultural ideals even as she tries to live life on her own terms.

The duality in her character makes her what she is — a post-colonial subject. She is both a subject to the oppressive social apparatus as well as a subject possessed of the liberating western individualism. She is living a dual life due to the pressure of the society. It will be apt to quote these lines in this context:

"........Impact of women’s liberation movement of the sixties and the influence of western feminist thought, a new woman has emerged with her own desires, ambitions and quests to break away the shackles of ages old concepts, beliefs and customs which had chained her to the four walls forcing her to devalue herself. But in the process of their fight against the repressive forces of tradition and prescriptive roles based on idealized models of a bygone era and their desire for newer wider horizons make some of them live dual existence, feel confused, angry and reactive and how some of them determinedly cross these barriers and carve a niche for themselves........ (Anand, 2008, 69)."

The conversation, between He and She shows, that in the modern times man has to pretend all the time. She admits that she has to pretend that it is just because of the traditional roots and norms from which she wants to come out and she plays a different role at different times, one with her lover in a bikini all alone and another of society—a woman in sari, but she rejects the later. She delivers a long dialogue regarding her suppression and repression which she has to face from her childhood. Here Ezekiel mocks at some traditional Indian manners and practices and through
them at the society. Through her dialogue, Ezekiel wants to suggest that the first generation parents and their second generation children are in conflict because of their parents’ expectations especially from their daughters to live by the traditional value system of India.

The Indian society does not allow the girls to mix up with the boys. The girl child has to face boundation in each and every phase of her life. In the tradition bound Indian society everything associated with the modern is rejected. In the old psyche there was a cloud of suspicion and distrust. Ezekiel mocks at the Indians who have plenty of talks about money, property and food. They waste their time in gossips. He also mocks at the religious practices in India which are performed endlessly without knowing the meaning. Ezekiel shows how people hate everything which is new and different. They don’t want to accept the new aspects of life; they want to follow their routine and own conventions.

She breaks away from the boundation of the tradition and voices her feelings, desires and thoughts freely. This urge to get freedom break away from the past is the idea of modernity as she rejects the traditional norms and conventions of society which are forced on her. Here Ezekiel brings to our concern the idea that freedom can lead us towards sexual freedom for later in the play we find the totally modern outlook of She. She wants to live alone without interference of society but in reality one cannot ignore the society and get isolated from it.

SHE: I don’t want to solve that problem, I want to live, that’s all. (Anklesaria, 2008, 172).

In the end She tears the transparent screen and sits in the lap of He. She assumes that the audience is not there but in reality they are present, this
all signifies that one cannot ignore society, and only the modern man can pretend and ignore reality. Regarding the characters of Ezekiel it can be quoted:

The hollowness inherent in the plays, and the playwright’s, careful manipulation of the characters as types so that the situation dominates – the characters seem to view life as a beach party, with the fun spoiled by grandmother and society; They speak of freedom but all completely unconcerned with responsibility, indeed for them freedom means merely license........ (Blackwell,1976,269).

He is introduced, dressed as pierrot his face resembles a white mask, but he is not actually wearing a mask. The gesture and the body movement of He clarifies his mood. At the table he is shown to sit with his legs widely spread out which suggests his great confidence, almost aggressiveness. He holds his body erect, squares his shoulders and is impatient to talk with She. He dials She very slowly and carefully, as if he is doing some urgent job. The playwright also displays how the life of modern man is being governed by telephone, especially the life of modern lovers. He is a young lover who wishes to make love to his beloved but being unable to meet in reality he starts imagining her and talks with her on the phone.

**HE**: At least say something erotic. (Anklesaria,2008,161).

He wishes to have total isolation from the world and wants to ignore the presence of the society. Even in their imagination the two lovers want to be isolated. He says,

**HE**: We’re together somewhere, isolated from everybody. (Anklesaria,2008,P161).
He wishes to get freedom like children who are free to do anything as there are no societal pressures on them. Through the character of He, Ezekiel brings to our focus the psyche of modern lovers who like to enjoy life, live in a world of imagination, pretend all the time and lead an artificial life.

SHE: Anyway, I prefer the other role, the girl in the bikini.

He suggests to She,

HE: We join the underground. (Anklesaria,2008,172).

This shows that they are aware of their illegal act and want to hide from the society which is represented by the audience in the theatre.

HE: Shut out the audience, the present audience. (Anklesaria,2008,173).

As K. Balachandran comments:

She only begins the play – not only the play but also the love play. It is indicative of woman – only she spreads the love net first. Like the fallen Eve tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. She prepares him for the ‘forbidden’ act. During her talk with him she recalls her dog and its nasty rubbing his ‘this thing’ with one foot; and no doubt this has sexual connotations. On the whole She talks 142 times and He 143 times. The play ends with his speech. (Sharma,1995,147).

Ezekiel’s artistic excellence impresses beyond measure. The dialogues are very important in one act plays. Ezekiel makes his play easy to understand by using simple and brief language. Only one long speech by She is given to clarify the whole idea about the background, of the play the double
standard of morality for men and women. The playwright uses unconventional words like, ‘Darling’, ‘Poorchap’ ‘Fab’, Goodlord’ etc. He also makes use of erotic vocabulary in his play like ‘rub his this thing’, ‘beautifully dirty’, ‘bathed in perspiration’ ‘lick the perspiration off your body’, ‘salty darling salty’ play together naked like children’. The playwright also uses female anatomy as well as garments like ‘in the armpits’, ‘between the thighs’, ‘in the parting of your hips’ ‘bikini’ ‘lick the perspiration off your body’. He depicts the real situation of the modern urban lovers for whom physical love is much more important than spiritual love. Regarding this it may be quoted:

Sex is part of life no doubt, but the way in which both the characters discuss, seems not healthy sex. Both represent bottlenecked individuals any brief privacy is enough for them to break their suppressed desires and forces. They are the Khajuraro characters in life and the play is a khajuraro in words. It may be even considered as a sermon in disguise though it depicted the art of love making. (Sharma, 1995, 149).

Ezekiel is bold in describing man woman relationship from the biological point of view. He presents it as a normal reality of life. Sex is a normal instinct in man and woman and it is natural if they desire one other for sexual union. Through the play Ezekiel shows that sex is not a myth but a reality like other realities of life. In a very artistic way Ezekiel presents before the audience the bold issue of sex for He believes that love and sex are no longer taboos.

The playwright applies light an effective theatrical device. In the beginning of the play the rooms are brightly lit while the rest of the stage is in darkness. He employs many other devices like the modern urban
gadget bell which She hears and throughout the play ringing of the bell can be heard by the audience. Another theatrical device in the play is the audience; the characters of the play are aware of the audience and wish to go away from the audience. One of the striking factors of the traditional theatre is the relationship between the audience and the actors like in ‘Song of Deprivation’, participation of the audience is shown. Both the characters address the audience during the action of the play. This keeps the audience involved in the action of the play. Thus it is one of the traditional devices which is used by the playwright in the modern context.

The play uses light comedy according to the nature of the play. The traditional theatre reflects high stylized action through music and dance. Music and dance are two elements which develop the total concept for the traditional theatre. The excessive implication of these elements represent playwright’s blending of traditional theatrical form with the modern theatre. Music plays an important role in the play. As the play begins we hear a light popular rhythmic music for two minutes before opening of the curtain. In all the plays of Ezekiel music acts as an effective theatrical device. Throughout the play She keeps on playing transistors which throws music on which they both dance together. Transistor becomes one of the instruments of dispersing music on the stage and describes the mood of the characters. This excursive use of the music is a sign of modernization which includes the increased communication in the form of radio, phone etc. Music is functional and organic to the performance. It also becomes integral to the actors, gaits, movements and physical acting. It emphasizes the actor’s entrance and exits, highlights their movements and provides a frame for visual images.
The play is a beautiful blend of the old and the new, of religious-cure philosophy and worldliness cum-sensuality, of traditional and modern value system. The character of He and She are modern but they are tied down by the conventions of society due to which they are unable to meet. It is the pressure of society which restricts their freedom. Ezekiel has created a realistic amalgamation of Western and Indian value systems.
REFERENCES


