CHAPTER – II

TECHNIQUE IN EZEKIEL’S POETRY

Indian English poetry has now finally come of age. What started as planting a few saplings has now grown into a veritable garden with a splendid variety of trees and plants and vines and shrubs bearing a variety of fruits and flowering all having a distinct flavour and fragrance yet partaking a commonality from the soil in which they have flourished. After the initial flip flop Indian English poetry has flourished to acquire a distinct identity as a valid and authentic Indian poetry. The post-independence poets have succeeded in evolving a distinct idiom and style to write about Indian ethos in English. Indian English poetry has evolved from the derivative and imitative stage of early poets to the muted cautious attitude of the early post-independence poets to the confident assertive stage of the later poets. Each generation has taken it a step ahead in its evolutionary journey. Barring a few exceptions like Dom Moraes, who claimed to be British rather than Indian, most Indian English poets have realised that they are relevant or important only as Indian poets and not as ‘British’ or ‘American’ poet even if they lived in England or America for a long time or settled there.

The evolution was not just in the field of language. The Indian English poetry has evolved in terms of style and technique also. For a long time, Indian English poets had to face an ontological question whether genuine poetry can ever be written in English which is not an Indian language. While most pre-independence Indian English poets were taken lightly as a kind of fad or an aberration, it was after independence that the writers writing in English in general and poets more specifically had to face the criticism that Indians writing in English were worshipping
false gods and their creations were sham and spurious. One reason why the criticism became loud post-independence was that for the first time since its beginning the poets themselves were taking their art seriously. For them writing poetry was not a pastime or a leisurely activity. For them writing poetry was a serious activity, an inevitable and essential need for self-expression. Now for them the only way to counter the criticism was to write poetry that was not just good but excellent; to write poetry that was relevant to the race, milieu and moment in which they were writing; to make it a valid alternative voice for expressing the Indian sensibility. The need was to find and acknowledge their roots in the Indian ethos and to use, and adapt if need be, English as a medium of poetic expression.

The first generation of post-independence Indian English poets had a daunting task ahead. They were writing at a time when India was changing. After independence there was an atmosphere of charged nationalism. Everything colonial was not just looked down upon but hated. English was considered to be a tool of colonial persecution and hence a symbol of colonial rule. Writing in English at such a time meant nurturing a latent desire to continue the colonial legacy or acting like a sympathiser, if not an agent, of the British Empire. For many it was a pure heresy to write in English – the language of the oppressor. Many sneered at them for their snobbery and questioned their allegiance to India and people of India. Probably the anxiety to assert the roots to India led Nissim Ezekiel to write, in Background Casually that “I have made my commitment now / This is one: to stay where I am” (CP 181). It was in such an era of heightened nationalism that the early poets defended and established Indian English poetry.

Another challenge before the Indian English poets of the post-independence era was to evolve a style that could be the best medium to reflect the concerns,
preoccupations, sentiments and anxieties of the modern Indian. The social fabric of the nation was changing and hence there were new pressures and fault lines, aspirations and apprehensions, concerns and commitments. A new mythos was needed to express the new social ethos. The changed social reality required a new way of expression. The romantic emotional style of the pre-independence poetry looked out of sync with the new social reality. It was a period of heightened nationalism, Nehruvian socialism, and social reform. India was changing. Cities were fast expanding with multitudes of humanity flocking their streets in search of a new life and inhabiting their pavements and open spaces. The struggle of the common man, the life exhausting stress of daily life, the soul draining sense of deprivation in the midst of glamour and glitter of city life, the dreams and aspirations and resultant frustrations and failures: all these and much more were the subject matter of the new poet. They no longer wanted to find an escape in an idyllic world of green pastures and pristine nature. The post-independence Indian English poet is a poet of the city. S/He is a voice of the urban middle class. Most of them were from middle class family displaced from their native place due to their professional life. Many of them went abroad for study and stayed abroad for some years and returned to India barring a few exceptions that remained there. These poets sing of the anxieties of the educated Indian middle class, their sense of rootlessness and exile, their desire to find a spiritual meaning in life. Their poetry is a saga of their quest. It is confessional and incisively analytical.

One reason why post-independence poetry is completely a new beginning is that most of the post-independence Indian English poets have rejected any allegiance to pre independence poetry and most have unambiguously put it on record. These poets felt that the pre independence poetry was out of context now and the style,
language and technique used by the pre independence poets were just inadequate and unsuitable for modern poets who were writing in an age that was so far from being romantic. Makarand Paranjape observes that “The modernists’ rejection of the earlier poetry is, perhaps, a matter of generational shift in poetic taste, and as such, hardly surprising” (46). He, however, finds it a little disconcerting that almost all the poets of the post-independence period had consensus about this. This generational shift was so prominent, or at least the ‘modernists’ claimed it to be so prominent, that when Ezekiel’s first volume of poetry appeared, it looked like a new beginning. It is in this sense perfectly justified when Paranjape calls Ezekiel ‘the “father” of the modern(ist) Indian English poetry’ (43). The fact that the post-independence Indian English poets almost unanimously disowned their poetic predecessors is a testimony to the fact that the ‘modernists’ brought about a rupture in the perceived continuity of the tradition of Indian English poetry. Paranjape, however, refuses to believe a total severing of ties with the pre-independence poets and thinks that a poetics and a literary history of Indian English poetry is possible which accommodates both the ‘modernists’ as well as the ‘romantics’ of the pre-independence era. He believes that it is the duty of the ‘postmodernist’ poets of his generation that have to bridge the gap. It is possible and has been done by two of the most renowned critics of the Indian English literature i.e. K.R.S. Iyengar and M. K. Naik.

Ezekiel’s first volume of poems appeared in 1952, an opportune time for an aspiring poet to appear on the literary scene. During the 40s and 50s, the sphere of Indian English poetry was dominated by the melodious verse of Sarojini Naidu and mystic verse of Aurobindo. Sarojini Naidu died in 1949 but her poems continued to be published posthumously till early 60s and Aurobindo died in 1950 but his most ambitious literary work Savitri was published posthumously in book form in 1950 and
1951 though the poem was published canto by canto in the periodicals of the Aurobindo Ashram. So when Ezekiel published his first volume, the leading figures of the Indian English poetry were no more though their works continued to be published and remained relevant and respected. Tagore was still an overarching presence in the field. However, it also meant that there was a vacuum to be filled in the field of Indian English poetry which Ezekiel filled and ruled for decades.

Another boon for Ezekiel came in the form of assistant editorship of the poetry journal of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. Now Ezekiel who was a novice with just one publication to his name had a platform and an authority from where he can influence the poets and their poetry. He used to read and select poems and guide the budding poets about how to write and what to write. This was followed by a long career as editor of various journals including *Poetry Today* and *Imprint*. In addition, Ezekiel was also an art critic with *The Times of India*. Ezekiel also was a regular speaker of All India Radio. All the factors gave Ezekiel an opportunity to mould the poetic scene of the time and decide on an idiom for poetic expression. Ezekiel, the novice, was suddenly an influential person who could mould the poetry as he wished and he preached what he practiced. So in a sense, for a long time, Ezekiel was the mentor of Indian English poetry. He became a colossal figure almost a father figure who controlled the poetic circle. Ezekiel’s influence on Indian English poetry was so great that when one thinks of Indian English poetry from 1950s up to 1980s, it is obvious to think of those Ezekielesque poets who followed a style that was developed meticulously by Ezekiel.

Ezekiel himself was a very conscious poet. Poetry for him was very far from the romantic exaggerations of the earlier poets. He revised his poems till he found them to be exactly as he wished them to be. Every word, every expression underwent
meticulous scrutiny of the poet. The poetic diction and idiom used by Sarojini Naidu and Tagore must have appeared to Ezekiel to be dated and over exhausted. The romantic vein in which the pre-independence poets wrote was a remnant of the Victorian era. Much had changed in the world of poetry across the world. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* was almost 30 years old when Ezekiel’s first volume of poems *A Time to Change* was published. The Indian English poetry was cut off from the developments in the field of poetry across the Europe and America. So the young poet of the 1950s could not have related to the century old poetic style. His revolt was natural and he made no attempt to hide it. He most vociferously rejected the earlier poetic style. Ezekiel must be credited with the honour of bringing Indian English poetry in sync with the contemporary world poetry.

It was Ezekiel who first initiated the process of making Indian English poetry ‘Indian’ in true sense. India is not some exotic locale or artifact with which the poet wanted to entertain the western audience as one finds in some pre independence Indian English poets. India is a real place for Ezekiel where he belonged and where he felt at home, where he is ‘a good native’ (182). He writes about India that he knew and loved. Hence, Bombay figures prominently in his poetry. It is presented with all its squalor, noise and vitality. India in Ezekiel is neither glorified nor idyllic, it is real India depicted by an Indian poet addressing to an audience which was primarily Indian. The fact that Ezekielwas born in a Bene-Israel family who had migrated to India before some generations made him a natural outsider from the majority Hindu ethos. Even in terms of language also he was an outsider because his mother tongue was English though he knew Marathi which was, in his own words lost mother tongue and English being his second tongue. However, this does not make him a complete outsider. He once remarked that classical Sanskrit poets were his poetic ancestors.
This innate desire and capacity to identify with a literary and cultural tradition makes a case for an Indian cultural continuum which spreads across time, religions, ethnicity, and languages. Ezekiel enthusiastically accepts:

I am not a Hindu and my background makes me a natural outsider; circumstances and decisions relate me to India. In other countries I am a foreigner. In India I am an Indian. When I was eighteen, a friend asked me what my ambition was. I said with the naïve modesty of youth, ‘To do something for India’….(SP99)

It is in this background that Ezekiel’s poetry and his contribution to Indian English poetry should be understood. The first poem of his first anthology of poetry A Time to Change is a good example of what was happening in Indian English poetry and what change Ezekiel brought. The poem is built upon the journey and quest motifs. The poem, partly a lament and partly a prayer, continually hovers around the basic concerns of the poet: moral conduct, spiritual redemption, the desires of the body and the claims of the soul. It begins with a question and ends with a sense of certainty, assurance, and hope. The poem in this sense symbolizes the poet’s spiritual journey from doubt and despair to assurance and hope. The constant conflict between the spiritual and the mundane, between the sense of the sin and the desire for the redemption, between the demands of the body and the desires of the soul leaves the poet in a state of despondency. Redemption can be won by total and unquestioning submission but, as the poem says, “when the mind determines everything / The leap is never made, the music/ Never fully completed” (CP 3). The soul has to tune with the eternal cosmic music and the heart must dance at the rhythm of the cosmos. But this is not possible because the mind with its tendency to doubt and question causes alienation resulting in:
The amputated gestures, eyes turned away,
Incomplete absorption in the common scene,
Crammed, sedentary, in silent rooms,
Marking time on unknown ground
With faults concealed. (CP 3)

The poet looks at the head with suspicion and doubt. The questioning sceptical mind hinders the journey of the soul to redemption. The inability to achieve absorption in the common scene is a predicament of the modern man and the fruitlessness of his existence is poignantly voiced in such expressions as ‘cramped, sedentary, in silent rooms’ and ‘marking time on unknown ground’.

The second stanza of the poem is built upon contrasts. The poet fully utilizes the denotative power of language and references to ‘April’, ‘creation’, ‘small rain’ and ‘half-hearted birds’ remind us of the opening lines of Chaucer’s ‘Prologue to the Canterbury Tales’ and Eliot’s The Waste Land making the reader discretely aware about the ironic contrast involved in the stanza. One learns that love of life can and is to be renewed.

The head and heart conflict is reflected in the third stanza also when the poet says ‘all the creed a man of God requires’ (CP 4) is:

A bit of land, a woman and a child or two
Accommodated to their needs and changing moods,
Practising a singing and a talking voice. (CP 4)

The singing voice is the sensual self and the talking voice is the spiritual self. The poem harps on the characteristic concern of the poet about the social conduct of a moral individual. Metaphorically the poem is a quest for ‘a style of verse and life’ (CP 4) to ultimately ‘win redemption / in the private country of my mind’ (CP 5).
The desire is to arrive at a golden mean, to ‘cut excesses’, and to ‘acquire the equilibrium of art’ in the passion of mind and heart as he says in another poem *On an African Mask*. In yet another poem, *In Emptiness*, Ezekiel says:

Let me always feel
The presence of the golden mean
Between the Élan of desire
And the rational faculties. (*CP 12*)

In the same poem he says:

Let reason and emotion fare
As man and wife; let them quarrel,
Make love or live occasionally
Apart, and then be reconciled
But let them not, indifferently,
Empty the house of words and music,
Partners of a marriage in decay. (*CP 12*)

The mood of alienation and melancholy reflected in the first stanza of the poem gives way to cheerfulness of hope and optimism in the concluding section of the poem. The sense of doubt—‘How shall we return’(*CP 3*)—and the fear of ‘flesh’ of the first section with ‘faults concealed’(*CP 3*) stand replaced by repetitive and confident assertion of ‘secret faults concealed no more’(*CP 5*) and by spirited confidence to ‘start again’(*CP 5*). The vague ‘we’ of the first section is also replaced by more personal and assertive ‘I’ in the last section of the poem. The lineation becomes shorter and laconic reflecting the sense of reconciliation and inner peace.

The poem is also significant for the poet’s informal style and freshness of expression. Its deceptive simplicity, occasionally startling the reader with unusually fresh images and expressions, has almost become trademark Ezekielian.
Ezekiel developed a style that was direct and simple. Ezekiel is known for writing lines which sound epigrammatic and convey wisdom of familiar kind. The characteristic homespun wisdom of the poet presented in lines of epigrammatic quality is reflected in the following lines of the same poem:

He has to silence no one but himself
And walk occasionally on alien land
To know the various lives and dreams of men,
And show his deep concern for the world
With words emerging from a contrite heart. (*CP 4*)

There are many examples of such lines which have such epigrammatic quality. Some of the best known lines are: “And remember that the eagle, / when he soars is always / alone.” (*CP 17*) “The best defence in love is just defencelessness.” (*CP 27*) “And Man is measure of mankind” (*CP 54*) “Home is where we have to earn our grace” (*CP 118*) “Holiness reveals itself in everything.” (*CP 56*)

Ezekiel’s genuine interest in the unspectacular man makes him look at him and write about him with warmth and understanding. It is this love for the common humanity that serves as a saving grace for Ezekiel even when he writes with humour and irony in his poems of character portrayal.

The title of the poem, *A Time to Change*, is prophetic and sounded the herald of the new poetry in Indian English poetry. It has all the characteristics of what came to be known as the modernist poetry in Indian English poetry, though not all poetry of the post-independence Indian English poetry has all the characteristics of the modernist poetry. Moreover, when the first collection of Nissim Ezekiel was published, modernist movement had already tapered off in Europe for almost a decade. In addition, the circumstances that led to the birth of modernist literature in
Europe were not completely present in India. Though India had just gained independence and had seen the traumatic experience of the partition, it still was far from a ‘modern’ society. The social structure of India was still intact and the sense of rootlessness and alienation that people in Europe felt were absent. Moreover, in spite of the gruesome incidents of the partition, the mood was one of positive enthusiasm and hope. Though there were signs of growing urbanization and migration from the villages, Indian social structure, known for its rigidity, had stood the stress of urbanization. It was, and still is, far from true to say that a common man from India would feel rootlessness and loneliness as was the prevailing mood in Europe during the first two or three decades of the twentieth century. The problems of the newly liberated nation were different from those of Europe of the first quarter of the last century.

The modernist poetry in Europe appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continued to prevail up to the WW-II. The rapid urbanization following industrial revolution led to a new social reality. The cities were becoming bigger and bigger with large masses of immigrants flocking to cities and causing havoc with the established social order. There was an environment of despair and disillusionment. The WW-I had left a deep scar on the social fabric of Europe. The mood was that of alienation and rootlessness. The recent theories of the social scientists and scientists led to a crisis of identity, not just individual but cultural identities also. The earlier century had seen Darwin’s theory of evolution. Freud’s ‘Interpretation of Dreams’ and Einstein’s theory of relativity appeared by the turn of the century. Though modernism is a difficult term to define, one common element that can be seen in all modernists is their total rejection of the Victorian conventions and style. There was a plethora of ideologies and isms that flourished during the period that together make
what we call modernist literature. So modernism encompasses various artistic and philosophical movements which include symbolism, futurism, surrealism, expressionism, imagism, vorticism, dada, and others. The basic aim was to break away from the conventions and to create something new. Ezra Pound, a leading poet of the imagism, reflected the essence of modernism in his famous dictum, “Make it new!” The modernists believed that there is nothing new left to be said, so to say something new they have to create newer forms of expression. So avant-garde was the buzz word.

The themes of the modernist movement were hopelessness, anxiety and disenchantment especially thanks to the devastation of the world war. They experimented with their language and wrote poetry in fragmented cryptic sentences. The excesses of the Victorian romantic poetic style were rejected. The modernism in poetry can be understood from its four aspects: new experiments in form and style, new themes, new modes of expression, and complexity and polyvalent nature of its themes.

Modernism is synonymous with experimentalism. Hence, one finds a sudden flurry of new ‘isms’ in art and philosophy. There is the imagist poetry which tried to strip language of all embellishments and present the idea in the form of concrete images for the reader to grasp the idea or experience. The symbolists tried to express idea and experiences or feelings in terms of deep symbols to be interpreted by the readers. Realism tried to depict the reality before the readers and naturalism aimed to convey the inner reality that is psychological or private. Expressionism was away of probing in to one’s own psyche and convey the hidden meaning of the experience. These and such other isms were the artists’ way of finding newer modes of expression.
Modernism also meant poets and artists attempted subjects and themes hitherto considered to be unworthy of poetic treatment. The earlier Victorian romantic poets treated subjects that were universal in appeal and significance. The new poets would write about almost anything. The subject of modernistic poetry could be a wheelbarrow or a person eating plum, or guilt of abortion or a woman’s erotic body. And what is more striking is the poet’s ability to use multiple themes in a single poem. Because of this multiplicity of themes, the poems could be interpreted at various levels. Traditionally the poems used to be closed in meaning in the sense that it has an apparent meaning but here we have poems that are open to various interpretations. It is the reader who reads the poem to interpret it the way one likes.

Moreover, modernism with its penchant for experimentalism led to a total rejection of and revolt against the established conventions of poetry. So we find old traditions of form, style, stanza, rhythm, rhyme, meters, etc. are thrown off and the poets tried innovative experiments. The traditional symbols, images and metaphors acquire completely new meaning and significance. The modernist poets employed new images and metaphors to achieve greater expressiveness. These images were drawn from non-conventional spheres such as city life, war, commerce and industry, politics, and science and technology. The freshness of imagery gave the poets greater freedom to express more in few words.

So in the light of this background of modernism and the first poem of Ezekiel discussed above, a better picture emerges of how Indian English poetry developed in the decades immediately after independence. The poem A Time to Change shows the influence of the modernist poetry. The style is pithy and succinct striping all the redundant embellishments and excesses common to Victorian romantic poetry. The lines are short and show a rugged pace. The sentences are fragmented and broken in
to pieces to create the impression of poetic lines. In fact, if the lines are arranged in continuity instead of breaking them down, it would appear like a prose piece. Nissim Ezekiel is a poet of contradictions. He uses contradictions to drive home the message. Ezekiel uses language in a very startling manner. It is simple and colloquial and yet used with precision. The poem flows in a slow manner and the reader is surprised with a sudden direct, prosy and rhetorical statement. It has the quality of being almost epigrammatic. The unusual epithets like ‘half-hearted birds, uncertain dawns’ (CP 3), ‘cities fresh as brides’ (CP 4), ‘amputated gestures’ (CP 3) used by Ezekiel create an effect that he wants to convey.

One important tool that Ezekiel uses is irony. He uses irony to create a voice that is detached and analytical. He writes about his subject with a detachment of an observer which gives him an ability to analyse his subject with the objectivity of reason. He doesn’t get carried away by the emotion. He retains his objectivity and intellectual attitude to life. Irony has two distinct tones. One is satirical. When it is satirical the poet is aloof and looks upon the object of satire from a distance. The poet observes the object of his irony from a distance disapprovingly and uses irony to satirize the object of irony. The other is compassionate irony in which the poet is not bitter or does not intend to jeer the object of his irony. He is sympathetic and shares the ironic situation.

Irony is a powerful tool which has been appropriated by modern writers and poets to present reality as it is. The modern world with its complexities and contradictions does not yield to clear categories of black and white but rather appears as shades of gray. The increased awareness about the complexities of modern life has led the modern poet and writers to turn to irony and it became a favourite tool for them. Niranjan Mohanty writes:
The writer/poet may be attracted toward the ironic mode because of a failure to comprehend pure tragedy and pure comedy. Irony becomes a positive mode insofar as it mediates between the serious and the ludicrous, between the tragic and the comic. The writer comprehends reality in a larger perspective. He makes attempts to present things as they are. He does not risk sentimental moralizing. His task is to uphold the gap between the apparent and the real, between the ideal and the trivial. The motive behind such exploratory exposition may be redemptive, but the act of revealing the gap is unaided by any such logic. The ironist is a realist or a materialist at the core.

So gradually, irony became a world view. During the eighteenth century irony was a rhetorical device but in the twentieth century it became a dominant literary expression. Irony allowed the writer to focus on certain type of objectivity. A distancing of the self was possible in irony. As Northrop Frye observes that irony is ‘a dispassionate construction of a literary form with all assertive elements, implied or expressed, eliminated’ (40-41). So Ezekiel uses this powerful tool to achieve the desired effect of the apparent contradiction involved in the situation without being moralistic. In *Double Horror*, Ezekiel talks about the irony of being infected by the city and at the same time infecting the city. The poet’s helplessness against the dehumanising powers of the modern commercial world and the determination to infect the world with his own corruption reveals the predicament of the modern man ironically. Yet another example of Ezekiel's use of irony is *Enterprise* where the journey began with seriousness and dignified purpose ends in a mood when they ‘hardly knew why we were here’ (*CP* 118). In *Event* the irony of the lady’s expectations and the poet’s response, in *Marriage* the suffering and pain involved in
marriage and in *Night of the Scorpion* the mumblings of the pheasants and efforts of the father to cure the mother of the bite end in futile when the mother remarks that “Thank God, the scorpion picked on me / and spared my children” (*CP* 131). Thus in poem after poem Ezekiel uses irony to bring out the apparent contradiction involved in the situation and to highlight the complexities of the human situation involved in it.

The post-independence poetry became urban. Not only the themes but the images were primarily drawn from city life. In Ezekiel one can easily find the images drawn from life that he knew. There are busy streets, the clamour of the urban life, and the world of commercialism, the industrialized society, and the ugliness of the urban civilization.

Ezekiel uses paradoxical statements to surprise the reader with an unusual comparison. Two apparently unrelated ideas are juxtaposed to convey a meaning that would otherwise not have been possible. In *A Time to Change* he says “Here in April we are waiting / for passages of pure creation or simply / girls” (*CP* 3). The juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory or incongruous ideas is a technique that Ezekiel uses and it strongly conveys a meaning.

Christopher Wiseman considers the publication of *The Exact Name* to be of pivotal importance in the development of Ezekiel's craftsmanship and poetic technique. According to him in this volume of poems one can see Ezekiel gradually breaks away from the forms and techniques which were constricting him and with which Ezekiel was not very comfortable. Wiseman believes that *The Exact Name* carries the poems of all three types: the old, the transitional, and the new. According to him the poems show Ezekiel's journey from formality to informality. Wiseman believes that prior to *The Exact Name*, Ezekiel's poetry shows extreme formalism. He observes:
In this, of course, he was merely reflecting the conventions of the 1950's, when most poets of the English-speaking world were obsessed with low-toned poetry, carefully worked in traditional metrical and stanzaic forms. Auden, Empson, Graves, Yeats, Frost were looked to for inspiration and imitation; sestinas, villanelles and many kinds of traditional forms were rediscovered and employed. The fastidious use of meter, rhyme and stanza-form was highly appropriate for the understated ironic modes which were so typical of the 1950's. (242)

Ezekiel's poetry conformed to the prevailing style. Ezekiel wrote with regular rhymes, strong meters, and formal stanza structures. Wiseman opines that Ezekiel was not quite at home in this technique and his original voice was being strangled in this formal rigidity. Ezekiel felt the need to cast off the technical formality and move towards a less formal and open style with which he was more comfortable and which allowed him sufficient liberty and space for his voice. According to Wiseman, Ezekiel did not experiment much with the traditional stanza forms. Because of this Ezekiel's earlier poetry seems to be suffering from mechanical rigidity though he had an innate talent for meters. Most other poets rely on variation such as foot-substitution, run-on lines, half rhymes etc. while using strict forms. This saves their poems from being too rigid and relieves monotony.

Wiseman also observes that the poems in *The Unfinished Man* lack sufficient variety. He observes:

In these poems Ezekiel's sound patterns are astoundingly rigid. Very few foot-substitutions -- even of the common trochee and anapest -- vary the heavy iambic pulse, and this heaviness is emphasized by the fact that he uses many fewer run-on lines than most poets. For example, "Jamini Roy" has not one foot-substitution. The poem consists of sixty-four iambic feet one after
the other with only six run-on lines out of sixteen, making the sound ponderous and insistent. This is heightened by the use of two-line end-stopped sentences, where the syntax reinforces the stilted effect instead of playing dynamically and expressively against the metre and the line breaks.

(243)

The poems where one can see the transitional phase are the poems where Ezekiel exercises much more movement away from insistent regularity of meter, rhyme, syntax and stanza structure. One can find examples of blank verse and free verse for the first time. Gradually Ezekiel achieved a technique that was suitable to his own voice. He realized that he has to abandon the borrowed style and adopt style that is suitable for his voice. Once he is liberated from the shackles of the rigid formality, his own voice becomes more and more clearly articulated and it strengthens and deepens. Some poets write better in traditional forms whereas some poets are more comfortable with free forms. Ezekiel is more comfortable with free forms than with the regular meters and rhymes where one can find a lot of rigidity and inflexibility.

Ezekiel gradually moved from formality to informality. Over the years he achieved greater over free verse. His poetry became freer and less rigid. One can identify an originality of style that lent his poetry a unique voice. Moreover, use of free verse provided him greater freedom to experiment and exercise novel expressions. As he moved away from the constricting regularity of syntax, rhyme, metre and stanza structure, he shows greater confidence to deal with more personal and important subjects. He could experiment with themes also. His poetry became more natural as he could follow the emotional and intellectual rhythm rather than artificial one of the metrical form.
The technical innovation and change in style that Ezekiel could bring about has helped him a lot. It gave him greater flexibility thanks to which he could attempt such diverse subjects in his poetry which range from mystical experiences to highly realistic social subjects.

Ezekiel is a poet who has always thought consciously about his art. He has evolved as a poet expanding his range and developing a style and idiom suitable for the changing times. His contribution is immense. One can trace Ezekiel's poetic career to trace the development of Indian English poetry.

Thus, Ezekiel uses a style in his poetry which is suitable to express the complexities and contradictions of the modern world. The time in which he was living was not suitable for heroic poetry or romantic poetry. The modern world with its absurdities and complexities required a style that was different from the style of poetry used by pre-independence poets. Ezekiel made his style conversational and direct. The language he used was language of the day to day life. The modern India especially urban India required an idiom that can express its reality adequately. It was to the credit of Ezekiel that he transformed Indian English poetry into modern poetry, made it relevant for the reader of his time, shaped it adequately to make it an instrument of expression of the changed social reality.

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