Abstract

The present research work attempts to study the broad spectrum of images in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry. Image, as poetic device, appears to be more significant and multidimensional. In Ezekiel this device has been used very skillfully, with utmost care. After a comprehensive study of Ezekiel's poetry, it is noticed that he adheres to certain beliefs and principles of life. The beliefs of the poet are most important. For neatly expressed, they get fused with the greater meanings and connotations. Images in Ezekiel bear the potential to open the vista of the very Indian culture. The central point in Ezekiel's thematic concern is alienation and the quest for identity. He also remained very successful in showing Indian life in its realistic form. The speciality of Ezekiel lies in the art of looking at the things with an ironic detachment.

It has been attempted to encompass a wide range of images in Ezekiel's poetry and their manifold connotations. The method of research chosen is analytical for a categorical and minute analysis of his images. His images are unified and expressed in a complete whole. Although these images seem to be fragmentary, there runs a coherent thread which has a complete and unified effect.
Apart from this the research is meant to familiarize the reader with the unfolding of many shades of meanings evoked through his skilful use of images. As Lewis says images do not simply arise from private memories but beneath these, certain archetypal patterns of our response to nature and culture are to be found. That is why this would be a great help for unfolding the manifold Indian cultural aspects.

The first chapter of the thesis is about the why, the what, and the how of the images in general. It is maintained that image as a poetic device is used to make language figurative. According to Abrahms (1978:76-77) there are three kinds of images in poetry mental, figurative and symbolic. Ezekiel uses images to concretize the ideas in his mind; to give his ideas a more telescopic vision.

Ezekiel’s images are lively and true to life. His images are complex and their study involves literary, psychological and religious motifs. His images are unique and are expressed in a unified whole.

In the second chapter, an attempt has been made to make a survey of imagery in general and its historical background. It is also the concern of this chapter to study Ezekiel’s contribution in the context of the images.

Ezekiel deals with a multiplicity of themes. He has published about seven anthologies of verse. Without studying Ezekiel’s themes and background, we can not attempt a proper study of his images.
The present chapter makes an analysis of the themes and the web of images in his poetry.

The third chapter deals with Ezekiel's images from physical or material world. Images of the physical world constitute a very huge part of Ezekiel's poetic corpus. This includes the palpable world around him. The elements: the earth, wind, fire, water and air are some of its contents. This is a broad category with several strands in it. It is observed that Ezekiel's formative genius is shaped in Bombay and the material world in the city has a deep and everlasting influence on the poet. When Ezekiel was asked during an interview how much the immediate environment influenced or inhibited him, he admitted that the immediate environment was one of his concerns (Imtiaz Dharkar & Anil Dharkar, 1979:27). It has been observed that Ezekiel is very much influenced by Bombay. It seems that Bombay haunts him like anything. It lures him. It casts a hypnotic spell on him and hence he expresses a deep sense of belonging for the city in *The Egoist's Prayers* the poet says:

Confiscate my passport, lord,
I don't want to go abroad
Let me find my song
Where I belong

(Ezekiel, 1989 : 213)

Ezekiel looked at Bombay from all possible angles. Every time we experience a new image of Bombay. So, the overall attempt in this chapter is to bring out the images of the mandatory material obligation with which humanity is paralyzed and thrust into a chaos.
The whole set of images in this chapter pertains to the physical world around the poet and conveys the poet's ironical purpose. The images like newspapers, cinema, radio-features, speeches, posters selling health, six easy lessons for a pound, etc are evocative of a typical materialistic city culture. These evoke the general sense of monotony of day to day city life. The superficial existence of city life is also exhibited through this. Apart from the images of urban surroundings, this chapter covers the images of Nature & Woman in their varied forms. His physical images comprise not only the animate world, but the inanimate world as well. It includes the cosmic imagery: the imagery of the moon, the sun, the stars, and other heavenly bodies or cosmic phenomena. The images of space, sound, light and the human body are the physical aspects of the physical world that make much of the fabric of Ezekiel's poetry.

The fourth chapter deals with psychological images. The world of the human psyche, of the internal nerve centres, of the brain and the mind, is often explored by mystics and poets. Ezekiel treats poetry as the first hand record of the growth of his mind. He loves simplicity. His love of the genuine is explicit when he weaves his thoughts with a fine psychological images of rational thoughts in the following line from the poem ‘Night Piece’:

These I have dwelt upon, listening to rain,
And returning in, resolved
That I must wait and train myself

And in the verse of friends I make
To have no trunk with what is fake:

(Ezekiel, 1989:59)
In the volume, 'The Third', the poet shows a remarkable maturity. There is no unnecessary diffusion nor any blurring of focus. The first poem in this volume is about the failure of a man who is not able to find his audience. He manages to conceal his private feelings with a public posture.

Ezekiel is successful in dramatizing the folk psychology in his poem 'Night of the Scorpion' where we find various psychological images. The poet is deeply interested in the psychobiology and considers birds and animals to be more human than the corrupted city folk.

In the fifth chapter, an attempt has been made to present a survey of Ezekiel's images concerning the spiritual world. The striking variety of images in Ezekiel's poetry is the imagery from the spiritual world. Though Ezekiel is not a mystical or religious poet, he adheres to certain Jewish and Hindu beliefs that take him close to his religious and spiritual bend of mind. Ezekiel has made a prolific use of spiritual images. In his poetry spiritual images spring from the great diversity of ideals. The poet comes out with his ideal of human balance that can be achieved in married life when he says in his poem 'A Poem of Dedication':

I want a human balance humanly
Acquired, fruitful in the common hour (1984:40)

Ezekiel's images of God are inseparable from his exploration of the theme of love. Both love and God are metaphors of freedom. Both these are in search of the secretive privacy and inaccessibility
of the soul. Both call for participation in the process of love and God. By this way he tries to come out of alienation. As Patel (1994:40) rightly says, "The reiteration in poem after poem of the desire to break out of self regarding loneliness ends in Ezekiel throwing himself into what's around him: India, Bombay more specifically, the here and now."

Though the poet is not committed to any particular system of thought or religion, the religious discourse provides him a mode of progression and a way of ordering his thoughts. There seems a metaphysical quest for truth which leads him to Psalms and Hymns. Thus the poet's spiritual quest is very remarkable. We observe that the poem 'Prayer' is an example of the religious attitude of the poet. But the poet has succeeded in showing that it is something different. In the poem 'Theological' the image of forgiving God is beautifully evoked:

Lord, I am bred
of being wrong

At most, You will forgive me
no doubt You
are good at that

(Ibid, 156-7)

The Sixth Chapter is the concluding chapter. Ezekiel has succeeded in weaving a beautiful texture with the appropriate use of images in the day to day human situations. Poetry, according to Ezekiel, is not a gift to be adorned but a craft to be studied with systematic efforts. He bears the capacity to use unique phraseology and innovative diction. He encompasses varied experiences of life.
He generally deals with the themes of city life, sexuality, problems of marriage, alienation, etc. In fact, his poetry is endowed with irony, critical self consciousness, strong intellectual purpose etc.

Thus, the present research work studies imagery in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry. The approach adopted is analytical and the procedure adopted is textual criticism. The research design is one of the explanatory and descriptive/interpretative model.