Chapter - I

Introduction
1 Introduction

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1.1 Preliminaries

The structural system of language is dependent on two different planes - phonology (the system of sounds) and syntax (the system of order of words). In poetry, phonological structure can operate directly in establishing relations between different strands and the higher units of words. It is essential to attempt an analysis of a systematic presentation of the creative but deviant uses of language for communicating highly emotive experience.

Language is that gift given to human which has become the most distinguishing trait of the human race. It differentiates human beings from other animals. Language is used by them in all their practical activities for all kinds of purposes. Without language, civilized human life on the earth is impossible. It is the power of using images the power of speech that makes man the lord of the earth. Language is often regarded as an instrument of articulation and a bridge that establishes relationships.

Language is used for a number of purposes, is put to a variety of uses, and performs the six basic functions popularly called (i) referential (ii) emotive, (iii) poetic (iv) evocative, (v) phatic and (vi) metalingual. It is expressed in many forms. The expression of language is based on the ideas and thoughts of its users and the
manner in which they use for specific context. It is not something like a cry of an animal but has relations with the other linguistic units and some other factors. There are infinite ways of expression. There are infinite ways of poetic expression too, differing from one poet to another as is clear from any statement made by Wordsworth, Keats, Frost, and Nissim Ezekiel. One finds differences in use of language due to its technical social, rhetorical, aesthetic functions as is clear in statements like, "I wandered lonely as a cloud", "Beauty is truth, truth Beauty". "I took the one less travelled by" and "Thank God the Scorpion picked on me and spared my children."

A poet uses language more consciously in poetry than in his day-to-day communication. The language of poetry is distinctly different from other forms of human discourse such as the language of science, prose, and the everyday speech. The language scientific discourse is used to tell facts and truths, here it is simpler but unpoetic. Poetry is mainly concerned with an imaginative expression of facts and fancies the poet's feelings attitudes, emotions, thoughts and ideas. The language of poetry is more precise than any other mode of expression. Poetic language is more highly structured, concentrated and novel than any other mode of human expression. The language of poetry is extensively different and exploits all possible resources of communication. The kind of language used in poetry is determined by the poet's thoughts and ideas. Poetry is termed as the best words in the best order as illustrated by a line,
like "The woods are lovely, dark and deep." The selection and arrangement of language used in poetry is quite different from that in prose, as noticed in "Myself must, I recreate" as used by W.B. Yeats in place of "I must recreate myself." The poet exploits all the possibilities of languages: "Brutus is an honourable man." (Julius Caesar) "Forty thousand brothers cannot equal my love to Ophelia (Hamlet) and "And miles to go before I sleep." The poetic discourse, content and expression are far more interrelated and interdependent than any other discourse. In poetry the meaning and the sounds are one. In poetry there are sounds of musical meaning or meaningful musical sounds. There are two kinds of expressional modes i.e. the metaphoric and metonymic modes. The metaphorical mode is noticed in the use of expressions like 'hall', 'apples', 'swinging on birches in Frost's poetry. Mending Wall is an illustration of the use of metonymic mode as the poet moves from the wall between the fields to many more other walls that divide races, religions and nations. As Shakespeare puts it-'This lives so long as men live'. The language of poetry has a permanence of meaning. A reader gets the meaning of poetry through its, vocabulary, imagery syntax and metrical rhythm.

Imagery is one of the most significant aspects of poetic language. The use of images gives intensity and economy to poetic composition. In poetic language the poet brings together the sensuous, the emotional and the intellectual and shapes them in his figurative images that he creates to convey his meaning. Imagery is
the most commonly used term and one of the most variable in its meanings. Its applications range from the ‘mental pictures’ which are experienced by the reader to the totality of the components which make up a poem. Lewis (1955:4) states in his poetic image that an image is “a picture made out of words and that ‘a poem may itself be an image composed from a multiplicity of images.” Imagery is said to make poetry concrete.

There are three types of uses of the word ‘imagery’ which are especially frequent. Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion or in the vehicles of its similes and metaphors. The term ‘image’ should not be taken to imply a visual reproduction of the object referred to. Some readers experience visual images and some do not. Imagery includes not only visual sense quality but also quality is that are auditory, tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold) olfactory (smell) and gustatory (taste). Secondly, imagery is used more narrowly to signify only description of visible objects and scenes, especially if the description is vivid and particularized. Lastly, most commonly imagery signifies figurative language, especially the vehicle of metaphors and similes. Look at the following lines:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd,
petals on a net, black bough.

Ezra Pound said he wrote the poem *In a Station of Metro* in 1916 to convey an experience. He suddenly saw a beautiful face,
and then another and another while emerging one day from a train in the Paris subway (Metro). He originally wrote a poem of thirty lines describing this impression and finally clipped to two lines in which each line contains an image. Each image is like a picture and contains what may be described in about a thousand words, though the term image suggests a thing seen. When speaking of images in poetry, the meaning generally refers to a word or sequence of words that refers to any sensory experience. Often this experience is sight (visual imagery as in Pound's poem) but it may be sound (auditory imagery) or touch (tactile imagery, as a perception of roughness or smoothness). It may be an odour, or a taste or perhaps a bodily sensation such as pain, the prickling of gooseflesh, the quenching of thirst or the perception of something cold as in "the piercing cold". Images give an occasion for imagining the specific experience. An image may occur in a single word, a phrase, a sentence or in an entire poem like In a Station of Metro. The imagery of light and darkness, spring and winter, reality and dream evokes such sensations that lead to multiple levels of meanings. It is in this context that the use of imagery as made by Nissim Ezekiel needs to be considered.

The major purpose of any literary activity is the expression of thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is through poetry that such an expression gets its full manifestation. The poet employs various techniques to make his poem a beautiful work of art. The technical aspects like rhythm, rhyme, metre, stanziac pattern, images and
other poetic devices are used to make language of poetry figurative. The use of an image acts as a vehicle of metaphor and symbol.

The poet’s vision and perception of life attained through his imaginative experience is the soul of poetry. It unfolds the mysteries of universe intuitively, the secrets of the heart, the depths of the psyche and the inner recesses of the human soul. It is far superior to that mystical experience aroused through religion and philosophy. To be concrete, the poet’s vision is the ‘image’ which is the source of the externalisation of his aesthetic and spiritual experience. Therefore, the study of the use of imagery by any poet becomes mandatory on the part of the researcher who desires to be creative and have a close look at the circumstances that lead to the moment in which the image is conceived. It is said that if poetry is the way of life, the use of imagery in poetry must be characteristically consistent with its emotive pattern and rhythmic structure.

In ordinary communication, images convey only their literal meaning e.g. The orator thundered like a tiger. “But in poetry, this device appears to be more significant. e.g. ‘I wondered lonely as a cloud’, ‘my love is like a red, red rose’. Images in poetry appear have to multiple dimensions of meaning. “Miles to go and miles to go before I sleep”. An image may be a metaphor or a symbol or it may be suggestive or connotative as well. Abrahms (1978:76-77) has pointed out three uses of the word ‘image’ but the three meanings are not kept clearly distinct. Still it is possible to think of three kinds of images in poetry: mental, figurative and symbolic.
(Preminger, 1979: 363) We cannot make a demarcation among these three kinds. However, there is a very slender margin that distinguishes them. So there are chances of a greater degree of overlapping of meanings.

An image brings out a complete vista of an author's perception of the physical world around him. Ezekielian images are true to life and innovative. The element of poetic innovation is found both in form and content of imagery.

1.2 Background of the Study

The present investigation is an attempt to explore the varied dimensions of Ezekiel's imagery. It attempts to explore the implications of his imagery in different contexts. A comprehensive study of Ezekiel brings out the fact that he adheres to certain beliefs and principles of life. When the poet's beliefs are expressed neatly, these beliefs are bound to fuse the expressions with meaning. Eliot (1953:242), the great imagist poet of the 20th century, makes it clear in his essay on Dante that, "what we should consider is not so much the meaning of images, but reverse process, that led a man having an idea to express in images."

The process that leads to the idea inherent in the 'image' is more significant is clear from the two views of looking at a wall 'something there is that doesn't love a wall' and that 'Good fences make good neighbours'. The process is seen at work in Frostian irony of opposites as in 'vocation' and 'avocation' 'real apples' and
'dream apples' and in Eliot's 'objective co-relative' in 'a patient etherised on the table'.

Ezekiel has been hailed as the father of modern Indian English poetry. He has been eulogized as a trend-setter who not only gave a direction to it but taught other poets how to write poetry. He has published about seven anthologies of verse, *A Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976) and *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). Ezekiel deals with the multiplicity of themes. His themes include love & sex, the clash of opposites, expression of the self, ordinary human situations, and common human relationships. It is noticed that the theme of alienation and at the same time a sense of belonging pervades his poetry. The investigation of Ezekiel's imagery needs to start with a panoramic view of his imagery. Therefore, it is proposed to examine Ezekiel's background at the outset. His life in the city, his profession of teaching, his attachment to motherland, and his Jewish lineage need to be kept in mind. In his case, Indian Poetic tradition and philosophy load and bless his images with an enigmatic beauty. The "oars of Indian philosophical tradition" have enriched his poetic idiom.

Ezekiel breathed every little breeze that came to him through Indian civilization. In his poems he has tried to portray Indian culture and social ethos. The hopes and aspirations of the common Indian fellow-beings, their trials & tribulations, their failures and

frustrations have found a befitting expression in many of his poems. The impact of the immediate natural surroundings was very great on Ezekiel's mind. His Images throb with life. No one can forget the smell of his own soil and the smell of the Indian soil pervades Ezekiel's Poems like 'Night of the Scorpion'. The reality as experienced in India is perhaps Ezekiel's major preoccupation. Many of his poems reflect natural phenomena, animal world, diseases and the physical environment. His sensuous imagery includes auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory or kinaesthetic as well as visual aspects.

Ezekiel's poetry springs out of passion and vision. His passion present in Bombay, the city of his being, is expressed in imagistic transformations. In his first volume 'A Time to Change' the title poem reveals the poet's frustration and his quest for identity. The poem is divided into five parts, which are fully loaded with imagery. The images like 'The stubborn workman' and 'breaking the stone', 'loosening the soil' express the thread of faith in one's life. The poet very frankly reveals his own perceptions of the seed time:

"Perception in April
Of my condition
Secret faults concealed no more."

(Ezekiel, 1989: 5)

Thus, an attempt is made to undertake a unified study of his poetry and his scheme of imagery. The study of images in his poetry will bring out wider connotations of his poetry and will provide a feast to the reader.

The attempt is to facilitate the reader with the unfolding of many shades of meanings evoked through his skilful use of images. 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 will lead to the unfolding of the manifold aspects of Indian culture.

Ezekiel's poetry illustrates various colours of ideas in terms of the images. The study attempts to concentrate on images in particular. Without measuring the depth of ideas expressed through the images, the study would be superficial. His vision of what is life, what it is not, what it ought to be, is communicated through a fine weave of imagery. No attempt has yet been made to put Ezekielian imagery on a high pedestal though it deserves such a treatment. The attempt is a modest one to apply telescopic lenses to the images. Ezekiel is a true devotee of the images. There is no dearth of images in his poetry. He praises good imagery in the following words:

The images are beautiful birds  
And colourful fish: they fly  
They swim in my Jewish consciousness.

(Ibid., 261)

Ezekiel's images are complex. These images involve literary, psychological and religious motifs. The method used for this investigation is analytical as the researcher has to undergo a categorical and minute analysis of his images. His images are unified and are expressed in a complete whole. Apparently, these images appear fragmentary. There is a coherent thread which has a
complete and unified effect. An objective categorization of images tends to break poetic themes into fragments. Through the analysis of object-based images the surface knowledge of images is obtained.

Images in the context of Indian poets are lively and true to life. Talking about it Das (In R.K. Dhavan, 1998: 18) aptly says,

“They are conscious artists who ‘look’ before and after and try to bring innovation both in form and content of their poetry. They are conscious of creating a new India and employing new imagery in their poetry.”

Images can be basically studied under two categories: object-based and idea-based. While studying an idea-based image we have to go via object. However, the end is exploration of idea. If greater emphasis is placed on the idea, the meaning of the image can be easily comprehended. For a better analysis and explication of images of any poet it is essential to go deep into the meaning of ideas conveyed through the images. Eliot (1953:290) rightly says, “One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system and the digestive tracts.”

The central point in Ezekiel’s thematic concern is alienation and a quest for identity. The growth of his imagery depends on his thematic concerns. The meaning of the images cannot be drawn unless they are studied with reference to the context and idea they stand for and express. The investigation is aimed at a complete study of images with reference to the contexts and ideas for which they stand and express. It is the superb poetic skill of Ezekiel that
presents the spiritual history of mankind in his remarkably suggestive imagery. Ezekiel's poetry has in it a system or a pattern of imagery that depends on his method of search and exploration into human consciousness. This consciousness is well wrought in his poetic consciousness. The researcher aims to help the reader to understand Ezekiel's art of exploiting images to explore human consciousness. Once this consciousness surfaces, the reader can enjoy the aesthetic pleasure, which is the ultimate aim of every kind of literature.

1.3 The Statement of the Topic

The topic that is selected for the present study is clear from the background of the study. It is a study of the use of imagery in Ezekiel's poetry. The study of the use of imagery will have to be made by attempting the categorisation of the different images used by the poet. The three broad categories used by the poet are Physical images, Psychological images, and Spiritual images. The topic of research is related to the use of imagery by Ezekiel in his poems in the seven collections of poetry published by the poet. The collections of Ezekiel's poems cover a period of about three decades in the second half of the twentieth century. Ezekiel is considered to be a pioneering figure in the march of modern Indian English poetry. The topic of the research is therefore stated as "Images in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry".

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are following.

1) To concentrate on the study of images as employed by Ezekiel in the seven collections of his poem.

2) To undertake a unified study of Ezekiel’s poetry with special attention to the use of imagery.

3) To unfold to the reader the many shades of meaning of Ezekiel’s images.

4) To attempt an analytical study of the images with reference to the related areas of study in philosophy and psychology.

5) To study in detail the co-relation between the use of imagery and real life experiences.

6) To attempt a close study of images with reference to the context of the modern urban life in the metropolitan.

7) To critically assess Ezekiel’s contribution to the Imagist Movement in modern Indian English poetry.

8) To attempt a broad categorization of Ezekiel’s images and to bring out their significance through their interpretation.

The above mentioned objectives of the study will be adhered to most scrupulously in the presentation, interpretation and analysis of Ezekiel’s use of imagery.
1.5 The Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is marked by the development of Ezekiel’s poetic career. The seven volumes of his poems mark the bounding lines of this study. The first volume of his poems *A Time to Change* was published in 1952. The second volume is entitled *Sixty Poems* in which there are three broad divisions such as new poems, (1950-1), and early poems (1945-8). There are Nine Poems in the third part of Early Poems composed between 1945 and 1948. The second lot of poems composed between 1950 and 1951 contains thirty seven poems. The first part of new poems has nineteen poems written between 1951 and 1953. Though the title is *Sixty Poems* of this second volume published in 1953, the number of poems included in it is Sixty-Five. The first volume *A Time to Change* has thirty-one poems. The third volume is *The Third* and it was published in 1958. It contains thirty-six poems. The fourth volume is *The Unfinished Man*, published in 1960 containing ten poems.

The fifth volume, *The Exact Name* published in 1965 has twenty poems, which are written between 1960 and 1964 and thirteen poems, written between 1965 and 1975 and seven poems composed in 1974. The sixth volume is *Hymns in Darkness* published in 1976. It has twenty-seven poems. The seventh volume was published in 1982. It has ten poems written between 1976 and 1982. An addition was later made to include seventeen poems written from 1983 to 1988. The scope of the study is determined by

these two hundred and thirty-six poems included in Ezekiel's seven volumes published from 1952 to 1988. The period of composition of these poems is about forty-three years beginning from 1945 and ending in 1988. The images employed in these poems are interpreted and analysed to bring out their poetic significance in the study.

1.6 The Methodology of the Study

First, the method used in the study is that of identifying the image. The images are assigned broad categories. Three broad categories of images have been formulated on the basis of the area to which these images may be meaningfully assigned. The first category is of physical images. There is further classification of the physical images into cosmic, elemental, nature images, city images, and further down to sensuous and physical images. The second category is of psychological images. The different moods of the mind are further grouped according to the phases through which the image transports the undergoing of the psychological experience. The third category is of spiritual images, which have been further grouped in accordance with the five stages in the struggle for spiritual regeneration. Physical images are divided in six groups, psychological images in five groups, and spiritual images in four groups. After identification and categorisation each image is interpreted to bring out the different shades of its meaning. A critical analysis is offered to put it in the context of Ezekiel’s poetic contribution to modern Indian English poetry. The method of survey
cum interpretative analysis is employed in order to discuss nearly two hundred and sixty images in the study.

1.7 The Chapter Outline of the Study

The present study is divided in six chapters. The chapter outline is as listed below:

1) Introduction
2) Ezekiel's contribution to the use of imagery
3) Physical Images
4) Psychological Images
5) Spiritual Images
6) Conclusion