Chapter – II

Nissim Ezekiel's Contribution to the Use of Imagery
2 Nissim Ezekiel's Contribution to the Use of Imagery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Origin of the Images</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Imagery Defined</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Imagery Explained</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The Use of Imagery in Indian English Poetry</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Nissim Ezekiel's Use of Imagery</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nissim Ezekiel's Contribution to the Use of Imagery

2.1 The Origin of the Images

The process of tracing the origin of the images is difficult. Of the two views of French poets and the Russian critics it can not be conclusively said as to who is right? The French poets with their romantic faith consider that they have a direct personal access to the image making collective conscious. The Russian critics have their sober theory concerning the conscious literary transmission of traditional images. Both these ways involve the queries like what is the cultural source of images. What is its literary history? What is its context? What generic affinities do they prefer? Instead of attempting to deal with these large issues, two simple questions can be modestly put forward viz. what exactly do we mean by “Image”? And what functions do images perform in a literary work? It is maintained that an Image is as old as an Idea. That way, Image may be regarded as a picturised form of an Idea. Certain psycho-analysts believe that idea precedes the image. In the later years there came an Idea based approach to the study of Images. It was originated from Plato's idealism. Plato believed that the physical objects in this world are nothing but a series of ideas. Cox Harvey (1966:64) has rightly pointed out, "Plato asserted that the objects of our
knowledge are not the physical things we perceive in this world of appearances but a series of changeless, perfect and eternal ideas all of which are eventually ordered and subordinated under what be called the Idea of Good ... the names precede men, not Vice-Versa.”

2.2 Imagery Defined

The Imagist Movement

The study of Images got its highest pedestal at the hands of the Imagist movement in the 20th century. Prior to this, Dante, and Shakespeare, made an effective use of Images in their works. T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound and his followers made new experiments in the domain of Images. This group underwent a re-orientation of idea and emotions. The tendencies of art and literature underwent a remarkable change in the hands of these poets. Commenting on this John Hayward (ed) (1959:8) says, “In arts and literature, the signs of change were isolated but ominous. The theory and technique of atonalism and of cubism were already established on the continent where the first surrealists had staked their claims in the freed unconscious and were consciously exploiting them. In this century, Schoenberg and Picaso, though already recognized masters abroad, were then just beginning to be accepted as innovators but few people had yet heard T.S. Eliot or his mentor Ezra Pound”.

It was Ezra Pound (1937:30), who for the first time, instructed his disciples including T.S. Eliot, to use “a presented image... the perfectly adequate expression or exposition, of any urge, whatever its nature.”
2.3 Imagery Explained

An Image has variously been defined by scholars through ages. 'An Image' says C. Day Lewis, "is a picture made out of words" and that, "a poem may itself can be an image – composed from a multiplicity of images." (Lewis, 1955: 4) Ransom calls the image in a poem the texture and the idea its structure. According to P.B. Shelley a poem itself is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. The Oxford English dictionary, and Random Harvest Dictionary of English Language, Webster’s Third New International Dictionary – cite the meaning of ‘Image’ as "an imitation, representation, reproduction or likeness of the external form of any object, especially of a person, either in solid or surface form – that is, an icon, a statue, or a painting". However the word shows a different etymology-which is related to the Latin word 'imitari' meaning 'to imitate'. In scientific terms image is an optical counterpart of an object. Images are things with a tangible reality in the context of the literary works. The recent critics have stated that imagery is an essential component of poetry and a major clue to poetic meaning, structure and effect. T.E. Hulme once said that images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. According to Shashi Bala Talwar (1998: 40), "An Image, from the psychological point of view, is a subjective experience, resembling perception in the absence of the original stimulus."

2.4 The Use of Imagery in Indian English Poetry

In Indian context the imagery has been employed as a means of expression, reinforcement, endorsement, illustration, evocation as also as objective co-relative. Men make use of images to articulate and clarify, to communicate, to enshrine, and sometimes to heal experience. "The Indian mind thinks in symbols and metaphors." (Alum, 1998: 1) Says Kaa Naa Subramanyam. Talking metaphorically or obliquely by implication is, generally speaking, natural with Indians. They fuse together “Concepts which normally occupy separate boxes in our mental filing system." (Ibid)

India has a rich heritage of Imagist poets. The eminent writers like Sri. Aurobindo, Tagore, Vivekananda, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Das and many others have made an effective use of Images in their literary works. A.K. Ramanujan makes use of the river imagery in his poems which evoke the Indian panorama that is nostalgic in his days in America. Kamla Das speaks of the ‘mirror’ in which the sad and sweet experiences of her life are imaginatively depicted. Arun Kolatkar makes use of folk-tales and the legends of the shepherd god through the images of goats, cows and beggars. Jayant Mahapatra writes of the sea at Puri and his images are enchanting and evocative of nature’s bounty and beauty. ‘The Parsi Quartet’ of Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawala, Keki Daruwallah and Saleem Peeradina write of ‘Nargol’ and other places from the western India. Against this background of the rich abundance of the use of imagery in Indian English poetry after the second world war and the

attainment of independence that the contribution of Nissim Ezekiel is presented in this study. It is Nissim Ezekiel who is gifted with a special ability, "To shift gears smoothly from the literal to fanciful, to enhance the possibility of wider implication, through his use of imagery." (Alum: 1998: 68)

2.5 **Nissim Ezekiel’s Use of Imagery**

Ezekiel is gifted with the art of writing with ironic detachment. His writing seems humorous at the surface level, but deep within it is full with a touch of poignancy. The poem 'Truth about the flood' brings out the picture of Indian officials visiting a flood affected area in Bihar is pointed with effective imagery. The lines below show it well:

Meet any official,
he will claim his district,
Sub-division or block
is the ‘worst-hit’
and pass on a hand out
with statistics of relief work.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 186)

The human quest to reach the goals amidst the broken path of disappointment is remarkably shown by Ezekiel. The poem 'Urban' in the 'Unfinished Man' is remarkable poem. The lyric delineates such a person and his predicament with mild sarcasm:

The hills are always far away
He knows the broken roads, and moves
In circles tracked within his head.

(Ibid, 117)

The image of ‘hills’ in this context stands for some important goals in one’s life. ‘The broken roads’ signify the disappointments in
the life. 'The circles tracked within' evokes the image of a confused state of mind when confronted with choices of roads.

'The Night of the Scorpion' brings out the rural ethos through its striking use of imagery. The phrases like 'Swarms of flies' and 'buzzed the name of God' bring out the situation as it is. The poem is built on irony which reaches its climax with effective use of imagery. The last lines of the poem are very striking:

Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.

(Ibid, 131)

These lines evoke the image of the very Indian mother full with her exemplary love for her children at the cost of her own agony, tolerance. The changing reality of love and human relationship on the one hand and the unchanging contours of Indian landscape on the other are sources of his images. The commitment to "self" and the city of his living (i.e. Bombay) helps him to create central images like those of his hero, the city and woman. In the poem, 'The Unfinished Man' and 'The Exact Name' one notices that the city has moved forward to a prominent position in the poet's consciousness. He creates a beautiful picture of the city with his magic words.

Barbaric city sick with slums,
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains.

(Ibid, 119)

There seems a constant struggle of 'inner world' with the 'outer world' in Ezekiel's poetry. He is committed to one or the other sects in Indian civilization. He has a deep understanding that
without commitment to life and living; all rituals turn out to be mechanical. Life becomes meaningless when marriage does not ensure love, and hence the author employs the 'image' like the following to evoke that bitter reality of human life:

Lovers when they marry face
Eternity with touching grace.

(Ibid, 123)

The poet, here also evokes the sense of the primal fall with an ease. There are three sets of images prominent in Ezekiel's poetry Viz: city, woman and Nature: The following chapters are devoted to a detailed study of Ezekiel's Images of city and woman. Images of Nature in Ezekiel's poetry have got a substantial position. The image of 'river' in Ezekiel stands for purifier of the impurities. It is traditionally believed that when one takes bath in the river one is purged off one's sins. This image is geographical and cultural as well. The image of 'home' stands for many things in Ezekiel. It stands for the house of his own, sometimes India. Home provides a sense of individuality to Ezekiel and shields him from fads and set pattern of the world. Home gives him a feeling of 'kinship' with the 'world' and he experiences it. In Ezekiel's poetry different images have different connotations. The images of 'journey' stand for the journey of life. It is also symbolic of the voyage into one's inner self-the voyage of self-exploration. There is always a reference to a pagan woman in Ezekiel's poetry. She is described as a beast of sex. She is symbolic of mean passion, earthly corruption and defilement. The image of city and city men lost, disillusioned and
bewildered is presented in all its horror and ugliness. Nature for the poet stands for the manifestation of greatness and glory of the supreme. The poet considers the wind as an essential element, a sort of inspiring agent. The image of 'hills' stand for the goals in one's life.

The following chapters will analyze, in detail, Ezekiel's skill in the effective use of images. The detailed study will help the readers to understand the images and its proper implication and its dynamics in general and in particular to understand Ezekiel's themes and convictions in a better manner. The very Native images and their implication will arouse the Native sensibility and enhance how different Ideas and images help the reader to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure that is hidden in a work of art.