Chapter - III

Physical Images
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The images of the physical world constitute a huge part of Ezekiel's poetic corpus. This includes the palpable world around the poet. The elements - earth, wind, fire, water and air - are some of its contents. This is a broad category with several strands such as light, fire, water and all sorts of nature images.

3.1 Cosmic Imagery

The physical images comprise the animate and inanimate world as well. It also includes the cosmic imagery, the imagery of the moon, the Sun, the Stars, and other heavenly bodies or cosmic phenomena. In the collection entitled The Exact Name we find the poet presenting with acute sharpness and also with a shift in essential attitude.

Cosmic I

In the first collection, A Time to Change, the city image has a cosmic implication. In the fifth collection The Exact Name the main emphasis is on the poet's perception of imagery which has grown more concrete now. In the poem 'In India', the imagery is not only vivid and graphic but Kaleidoscopic. The following poem is pregnant with a graphical representation of India with several urban images:

Always, in the sun's eye,
Here among the beggars,
Hawkers, pavement sleepers,
Hutment dwellers, slums,
Dead souls of men and gods,
Burnt out mothers, frightened
Virgins, wasted child
And tortured animal,
All in noisy silence
Suffering the place and time,

(Ezekiel, 1989:131)

In Ezekiel’s poetry:

“The images swarming in succession engage the attention of the reader till a complete image of an Indian city emerges before his eyes. The poet appears to be interested more in wholes than in parts and, working with a series of images, succeeds here in creating an illusion of reality. The images do not vary widely from one another but represent a class by themselves. The poet’s awareness of their interrelationship results ultimately in the composition of a complete scene, making explicit the pattern of life in one of the Indian cities.”

(Raheman, 1981: 55)

Cosmic II

Ezekiel brings out an image of a man found in a wretched condition and who ventures cheerfully in a universal darkness:

I met a man once
Who had wasted half his life,
partly in exile from himself,
partly in a prison of his own making.
An energetic man, an active man.
I liked his spirit
and saw no hope for him.
Yet, he had the common touch,
he could, for instance, work with his hands.

I saw him cheerful
in the universal darkness,
as I stood grimly
in my little light.

(Ezekiel, 1976: 223-24)
In the above lines, the poet identifies himself with both the speaker and the man described by the speaker. He is an energetic man with a common touch. The only thing is that the man is found in the universal darkness. The image of ‘universal darkness’ is indicative of the ‘ignorant self’ of the man and the ‘bliss’ he enjoys in that darkness (ignorance). Whereas the image of a ‘little light’ conveys the poet’s humble acceptance of the fact that he has a very little knowledge of the universe. Though the poet has a little knowledge he is standing grimly. On the other hand the poet saw the man cheerful amidst the universal darkness.

**Cosmic III**

A keen study of Ezekiel’s poetry will make us know that a striking aspect of Ezekiel’s poetry is its breadth of imagery. The images of space, sound, light, the human body reveal the cosmic aspects of the physical world that make much of the fabric of Ezekiel’s poetry. In the poem *Psalm 151*, the poet states:

Light rebukes and sky abuses,
Streets are empty, houses jaded,
Girls are doubtful, one refuses,
Colours of the earth are faded.

(Ibid; p.73)

**3.2 Elemental Imagery**

The use of elemental imagery is a striking feature of Nissim Ezekiel’s use of imagery. The other elements of the physical world
like Air, Earth, Fire, Water have a cognitive appearance in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel.

**Elemental I**

In the poem *The Cur*, the poet claims himself as being one of the five elements. The breasts and the lingering hands that hold the breasts or the mysterious gift of speech from the God are nothing but the result of the five elements. These things are the signs of existence or life. This feeling is conveyed through the following lines of the poem *The Cur*:

> I too am life',
> the image seems to say,
> Air, earth, fire, water
> Joie de Vivre – remember me.
> As you remember breasts
> Held with lingering hands
> Or speech in quiet places.

(Ibid, 95)

There seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images. Perhaps there is a series of public images each held by some significant number of citizens. Such group images are necessary if an individual is to operate successfully within his environment and to co-operate with his fellows. As Kelvin Lynch (1966:46) rightly says:

"Each individual picture is unique with some content that is rarely or never communicated, yet it approximates the public images, which in different environment is more or less compelling more or less embracing. This analysis limits itself to the effects of physical perceptible objects."
Similarly the poet establishes a unique kinship with this object of nature and grows rather Wordsworthian in his approach: “I’ve learnt to revel in the stone,” In ‘Transmutation’ the poet is move widely occupied as he aspires for a while hearted participation in the dance of elements and explores the real meaning of existence”.

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Apprehend
The carnival of things created: water, wind
And season’s breath.

(Ibid, 56)

The world is a manifestation of the supreme deity and an exploration of myriad scenes will lead to all understanding of the essential truth. In the poem ‘Child’ the poet, as a mature being, remembers the glory of childhood. The physical images of the wind sun evoke the freshness of the joy of the child:

Once I was a child
And in the morning woke to wind and sun
With upturned face receiving kisses from
The constant newness of the world.

(Ibid)

The third stanza of the poem ‘Morning Prayer’ pleads for ‘The fresh inward eye’ because it is only with this gift of imagination the poet can see every object bathed in celestial light. The images of physical objects in the Nature swarm here:
God grant me certainty
In kinship with the sky,
Air, Earth, Fire, Sea—
And the fresh inward eye.
Whatever the enigma
The passion of the blood
Grant me the metaphor
To make it human good.

(Ibid, p.122)

**Elemental 5**

Ezekiel is constantly aware of his deep-rooted feeling with the Indian soil. He is constantly conscious of the contemporary problems that India faces and these problems find mention in the poem ‘The Patriot’.

Pakistan behaving like this,
China behaving like that,
It is making me very sad, I am telling you.

(Ibid, p.238)

The images of the geographical entities convey the diplomatic relationship between these two countries. It also expresses a common man’s concern for the future of the country.

**3.3 Nature Imagery**

**Nature 1**

Ezekiel is committed to the city and its world of things. The Nature surrounding the city is not an exception. It lures him. Ezekiel shows an identity with the physical world around him. As he thinks

“To commit one self is to perceive the world of things and to find a sense of identity with them. The acknowledgement of a place of this “setting in”, after a long wandering, has sent out new lines of communication with the poet’s society and his bringing.”

Most of the times Ezekiel comes out with the nature images from the physical world around him. The hills, roads, rivers, sky, sun, rain and the other like organic matters that went into the making of an animal life are indicative of the cognitive self of the poet.

The following lines from the poem *Urban* convey the poet’s cognitive self through various images in the following lines:

*The hills* are always far away.  
He knows the broken roads, and moves  
In circles tracked within his head.  
Before he wakes and has his say,  
*The river* which he claims he loves  
Is dry, and *all the winds* lie dead.  

(Ezekiel, 1989: 117)

**Nature 2**

Ezekiel explores the wide chasm between his geographical and perpetual environment. Physically, he is bound to say, Victoria Terminus in Bombay, while mentally he lives in Matheran. In the poem *‘Urban’*, the citizen artist feels uneasy in his actual environment:

*At dawn* he never sees the *skies*  
*Which, silently, are born again*  
*Nor feels the shadows of the night*  
*Recline their fingers on his eyes.*

(Ezekiel, 1989: 117)
The image of the artificial life of the city leaves a certain inexplicable spell on one who cannot get away from it. Hence, this stilted atmosphere creates confusion in his own sub-conscious as reflected in the following lines of 'A Morning Walk':

The garden on the hill is cool,
Its hedges cut to look like birds
Or mythic beasts are still asleep.
His past is like a muddy pool.
From which he cannot hope for words.
The city wakes, where fame is cheap,
And he belongs, an active fool.

(Ibid, p. 120)

It is characteristic of Ezekiel that he finds Bombaywallah as rootless, the busy man, changing trains, belongs only to the city's turmoil. Hence he seems to the poet like, 'an active fool'.

In Ezekiel, the very Indian is evinced. Despite his visits to the other parts of world, he is an Indian in blood and spirit. V.S. Naipaul found Ezekiel an exception among Indian Writers. He was surprised to see Ezekiel bearing the Indian heat and squalor. Ezekiel is invariably found to be proud of his environment. The image of India is at the core of his writing:

The Indian Landscape seers my eyes
I've become a part of it.
To be observed by foreigners
They say that I'm singular
Their letters overstate the case

(Ezekiel, 1989: 181)
The Indian ness of Nissim Ezekiel lies in his intimacy with the Indian landscape. The image of Native Land is persistently used in his poetry. The rituals observed in the home country and her people belonging to all walks of life attract attention of the poet. The poet mentions the people in city such as a leper beggar found in a railway station, a woman beggar sitting elsewhere and the beggars, hutments-dwellers, and pavement sleepers.

**Nature**

In Bombay, everything appeals to him and he has described them in a cool, detached and matter of fact tone. He tries to catch the public ear with poetry of popular impersonation. (G.S. Frazer's coinage) He tries to imitate the different styles of talking of Indian politicians, clerks, reporters, professors, officials, and others. Ezekiel's award winning book, 'Latter Day Psalms' contains a number of poems, in which the poet makes an attempt to recreate Indian characters in their situations. The same attempt of recreating these characters may appear mockingly satirical. Ezekiel faithfully reproduces these characters as they appear in their real life. The idiom of these poems is made of colloquial speech. The tone is exceptionally conversational. Poems like 'Very Indian Poems in Indian English' 'Healers' 'Hangover' 'Touching' 'Family' and a few others belong to this category. The images of India pervade throughout Ezekiel's poetry. He presents the changing reality of love and human relationship on the one hand and the unchanging contours of the Indian landscape on the other. These two aspects of

reality and its companion environment appear to be the 'Spiritus Mundi' from where he draws all 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, in "The City and the Woman."

In most of his collections, it seems that the city has moved forward to a prominent position in the poet's consciousness. Gradually with the passage of time, the poet's attitude to this city (i.e. Bombay) changes. He ultimately sees through the outward manifestation of it. Thus the barbaric city becomes his beloved city and the sense of belonging to it is now absolute and final. He sees India through Bombay. The city is as much within him as without.

**Nature 6**

Most of the physical images in Ezekiel's Poetry are drawn from the Physical objects of Nature around him. Imagery from Nature is used to symbolize the innocence, freedom and depth of vision. These things could hardly be found in the city. In the poem 'Urban' poet 'never sees the skies; never feels the 'Shadows of the nights'. 'welcomes neither sun nor rain; his landscape has no depth nor height'. But instead of leaving the city, his mind turns to 'Kindred Clamor close at hand'. Essentially a poem about bad faith ('The river which he claims he loves') and lack of will, its tone is admonitory.

**Nature 7**

Image as a device is a spectacular instrument that evokes something more than suggested. As Bruce king (1987:87) says...
"While the abstractness of imagery suggests the subject's lack of depth or perception, the images suggest more than is said." The mind's traffic is a generalized image but perfectly links the urban theme with the man's distractions, while 'kindred clamour' slyly introduces the family as one cause of the problem. The poem 'Morning Walk' evokes, the hill image. The persona's high goal which seems to him practically impossible:

\\\\

........he dreamt of being lost
Upon a hill too high for him.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 119)

Nature 8

The material image of the minimum material hankering of the man on earth is found in a generalized form in the poem 'A Time to Change' where the poet evokes the sense of the optimum material requirements through various material images.

Nature 9

In 'A Poem of Dedication' the Ecclesiastic imagery of seasonal change as an expression of the organic is blended with imagery of flowing rivers into a sustained logical exposition.

There is landscape certainly, the sea
Among its broad realities, attracts
Because it is a symbol of the free
Demoniac life within,
Hardly suggested by the surface facts

Both poetry and living illustrate:
Each season brings its own peculiar fruits,
A time to act, a time to contemplate.

(Ibid, 39)
Nature 10

In the 'Poem of the Separation' Ezekiel brings out the subtle sense of irony. He brings into focus the validity of the 'normal' in spite of the intensities of the 'non-normal'. The images of the natural phenomena like 'Lightening' and 'Whirlwind' are fused with the behavioural patterns of woman.

Any man may be a whirlwind,
Any woman lightning

(Ibid, p.195)

The poet handles imagery with perfect felicity and ease. He succeeds in imparting a new meaning to it by constant reiteration right through his seven collections of poems. As Raheman, (1981:55) rightly says:

"Indeed, the imagery becomes integral to the total design of the poems exhibiting various facts of the poet's personality as an observer, voyager and one who realizes through participation."

Nature 11

The images regarding nature and the physical world pertaining to it symbolize purity and tranquillity. The study of the images of physical aspects in the nature is necessary to explore the final view of the poet. In fact the three sets of images relating to physical, psychological and spiritual are co-related one with the other and a separate study of any of them will lead one quite naturally to explore the other at the same time. Nature is also a broad classification like woman and city and assimilated many associative images of different types. The poet's quest to correspond with the
Words beyond presupposes. The image of a different cosmos – The rose garden of heavens. This symbolizes the pure and tranquil state of being as opposed to the earthly humdrum. In his earlier poem, 'A Time to Change' The poet remembers “new orchids of unimagined seas”. This city is entirely different from the city of history – bright, legendary and corresponding to the Garden of Eden. With this archetypal image of nature, the poet yearns to reach the primal roots of existence. Indeed, the poet’s commitment in the first poem is very serious but he seems to be a little relaxed in the subsequent poems, though the image of nature appears again and again. In the poem ‘A Word for the Wind’ the image of wind evokes a sense of a physical element or a sort of inspiring agent:

I brood on the wind, churning
The springs of many unborn songs in me,
Revealing in a flash the steady flame,
Fire in the heart of wind.
I cannot find a word for the wind.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 21)

Nature 12

This awareness of past in a present moment of time is transmitted through the set of images with equal intensity even now. The palpable images from Nature lend a particular charm in the poems like ‘Song for the Spring’. The poet knows the exit and entrance of spring. He therefore wants to see it at the right moment:

Spring, you are here, you are now
I see you face to face, I know
Your exits and your entrances.

(Ibid, 57)
Nature 13

In the poem 'After Rain' the palpable nature images take a sensuous form:

Lamplight, moonlight, dripping branches, wet road
Purer, sweeter. And now I know
It is just so.

(Ibid, 63)

Nature 14

The bird image is a common occurrence in Indian poetry. The image of crow is infinitely beautiful in Ezekiel's poem 'The Visitor'. Here the image acquires a traditional significance. It is a common superstition in India-voiced even by Sant Dnyaneshwara - that the cawing of a crow at one's window is the prognosis about a visitor. This is how tradition gives images and such images make poetry alive and true to the soil. No sensitive artist can ordinarily ignore or escape the peculiar life attitudes, thought processes, mode of perception and systems of beliefs - prevalent in the past and present of his environment. Thus the experience becomes at once local as well as universal. In the particular case it is both universal and Indian experience. 'The visitor', thus gives a subtle example of how tradition and imagery get completely merged into each other and finally becomes a poet's naturally earned knowledge and experience.

Three times the crow has cawed
At the Window...
Three times I got the message...

(Ibid, p.137)
However the images of nature acquire the symbolic status in the later poems. Though there is no any evidence of a shift in emphasis in the next volume, 'The Third'. The present collection contains images from nature on a large scale. The most part of this is a conscious attempt of the poet towards imagery. In Ezekiel’s poetry a number of allied images swarm with the pivotal image. The Nature image in the poem 'Conclusion' is both organic and full blown. The picture of physical elements in the Nature find its full length expression:

Searching for the point of it
The meaning and the mood, one learns
Over and over again the same thing
That women, trees, tables, waves and birds
Buildings, stones, stream rollers,
Cats and clocks,
Are here to be enjoyed.

(Ibid, p.96)

It is evident that the poet has developed a liberal attitude towards nature in as much he owns whatever he sees. Indeed he belongs more emphatically and warmly to the common scene than ever before. What is more, a choice of values is also involved in choosing the right image.

The Animal Images find its place in the poem, 'Aside'. Ezekiel here maintains that the ultimate reparation is Love. The poet says:

One cannot imagine
Elephants making Love,
But it seems they do
So also tortoises
And snails,
Or even other men
With women doing
What it seems they do,
No, one cannot imagine it,
Except as a song
In which we the lovers
Are sung and saved
From too much separation
Love is the ultimate reparation.

(Ibid, 92)

3.4 The City (of Bombay) Imagery

Ezekiel's formative genius is shaped in the city of Bombay. The material world in the city has a deep and everlasting influence on the poet. Ezekiel was asked during an interview, "How much does the immediate environment influence or inhibit you?" (Dharkar Imtiaz and Dharkar Anil, 1:10 (1979: 27) Ezekiel admitted that the immediate environment was one of his concerns. He lived in London for three years but he did not write much about London. When we make a detailed survey of his poetry, it seems that the city of Bombay haunts him like anything.

Ezekiel looked at Bombay from all possible angles. For him, it is a centre of corruption, defilement, moral bankruptcy, artificiality and extravagance. Ezekiel is a Bombay poet, and the images from the material world around him in the city provide him with a treasure of images. The poet has often juxtaposed two worlds in his poetry. On one side, he has placed the world of nature in its virgin
form and on the other side, he has put the world of artificiality of the urban world.

Ezekiel's images are undoubtedly rich and stand for the primitive simplicity. The birds and animals are shown to be more human when Ezekiel has compared them with the corrupt city people.

**City 1**

The poem 'Double Horror' in 'A Time to Change' is the best manifestation of the above idea of the poet. The opening lines of the poem illustrate this with more ease:

I am corrupted by the world, continually
Reduced to something less than human by the crowd,
*News papers, cinemas, radio features, speeches*
Demanding peace by *men with grim, warlike faces,*
*Posters* selling health and happiness in *bottles,*
*Large returns* for small investments, in *football pools*
Or self-control, *six easy lessons* for a *pound.*

(Ezekiel, 1989: 7)

The whole set of images used in the above lines pertain to the physical world around him and convey the poet's ironical purpose. The images like News Papers, Cinema, Radio-features, Speeches, 'Posters featuring health', 'Large returns for small investment', and 'six easy lessons for a pound'. These images are evocative of a typical material city culture, i.e. a world trapped in the cage of materialism. It also evokes a sense of the general monotony of the day to day city life. The superficial existence of the city life is exhibited through this material environment. The images like cinema, radio, news-paper are the gifts of the modern material
civilization and these things may cast a corrupting influence upon the masses.

The poet seems to be torn between the natural urge of his own self and the demands of the time. The corruption of his pure self and loss of all vigour are the natural attributes of living in a modern city. The city is portrayed by the set of corresponding images. According to Z.F. Molvi (In Bhatnagar M.K, 1999: 20), “These images have reduced the existence of the poet to that of a mindless creature. Besides, he considers the progress of the city a jungle growth which sucks life of men.”

**City 2**

We find a number of physical images from the city in the poem ‘Something to Pursue’, The Section IV begins with:

After a night of love I left the city
With intention to return, but carried it
Within me, markets and courts of Justice
slums, football grounds, entertainment halls.
Residential flats, palaces of art and business houses.
Harlots, basement poets, princes and fools.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 18)

**City 3**

The above images or objects give him a kind of experience, where he realizes that the city is nothing but a defiled centre of corruption. He considers that it is more pitiable that he has to return to such a city. That is his tragic plight. ‘Morning Prayer’ is a poem, in which Ezekiel evokes the horrors of the morning in the city ‘white
wings' to morning 'offer shelter' to the sleepless men and the 
exploited mass, while it also brings a state of spring and clarity. 
These white wings of morning ultimately bring them light with 
lucidity. Thus, he takes images from nature which are pure and 
uncontaminated and juxtapose them with city scene.

    White wings of morning
    shelter men
    sleepless or drugged with dreams
    ......
    White wings of morning
    Bring to city masks
    A taste of spring
    And clarity.

    (Ibid: 20)

City 4

The poet describes the image of huge posters in the poem 
'Commitment'. These posters have become a part of the urban set 
up in cities. This huge poster seems to be diminishing the size of 
man not only physical but mental as well:

    Huge posters dwarf my thoughts, I am reduced
    To appetites and godlessness. I wear
    A human face but prowl about the streets
    Of towns with murderous claws and anxious ears.

    (Ibid, 26)

Thus, the poet seems to be dehumanized and wanders like 
hungry animal in search of its prey. He, therefore wishes to be a 
man again and again.
**City 5**

Ezekiel finds the city obsessed by erotic fantasies. He evokes this perverted side of urban life with the use of images like Lipstick, Hats, Shoes, Knickers and Brassiers, especially in the poem *To a Certain Lady*:

Lady, don't nag
If you want that expensive lipstick
Buy it, for God's sake - not mine -
I mean, really, why should I approve of it?
And that goes for dresses, hats, shoes,
Slips, knickers and brassieres,
So long as they're not on the instalment plan.

(Ibid, 29)

**City 6**

The world of objects is at the centre of the consumerist city culture. Ezekiel seems to be suffocated by this materialistic world. At the end of the poem *Preferences* he says:

On a common summer afternoon
I turned away and wished it knew
harlots, publican and sinners and
their illegitimate shabby children of the
quitters, free of drawing rooms.

(Ibid, 33)

**City 7**

The final poem *Encounter* of *A Time to Change* presents a metaphorical significance of the city buses. The poet describes the routine of many men like 'buses on a fixed route' and 'jurking away like drunken men'.

The image of the 'lurking bus' is potent enough to evoke a sense of a 'day to day' routine of many men.

Many men, like buses on a fixed route, and buses jerking away like drunken men.

(Ibid, 35)

The above references remind us of Eliot's description of 'streets' as 'tedious arguments'.

City 8

In the further part of the poem the poet describes the mandatory material obligation which is pressed upon him. The images like shops, cinemas and business houses, the living people acquire a macabre of ephemeral quality.

The city pressed upon me, shop, cinemas and business houses
spoke in unambiguous accents.

(Ibid)

City 9

Ezekiel seems concerned about India and more so about Bombay, the city in which he lived. He talks about the mechanical life in the city. He shows how precious hours are lost between journeys in buses and trains and waiting in queues. In the poem 'Occasion', he writes:

Do you know where he lives?  
Ghatkoper, twenty miles away.  
Half an hour in a queue,  
fifteen minutes in a bus,  
forty minutes in a train,  
a long walk from the station to a slum.

(Ibid, 277)
By using a beautiful set of images the poet has successfully conveyed a sense of pathetic middle class life of a typist in the city Bombay.

**City 10**

The poet is troubled by the paradoxes in the city ‘Slums and Skyscrapers’ people come to the city with dreams but disappointment is inevitable. In the poem “Commitment” he writes:

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The fog is thick, and men are lost
Who wanted only quiet lives.
And failed to count the growing cost
Of cushy jobs or unloved wives.”
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(Ibid, 121)

**City 11**

The city, Bombay casts a hypnotic spell on the poet. It lures him. He had a deep sense of belonging for the city. That is why he says:

```
Confiscate my passport, Lord,
I don’t want to go abroad.
Let me find my song
where I belong.
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(Ibid, p.213)

If at all the poet leaves the city, it is always with him wherever he goes.

**City 12**

The total image of a city man lost, disillusioned and found in a bewildered state of mind is seen in the poem ‘Urban’, when the poet says, “The City Like a Passion Burns” and the protagonist – is

given to "Kindred Clamour" close at hand. The rapid growth of urbanization and its consequences are brought forth by using apt images by Ezekiel.

The city like a passion burns
The dreams of morning walks, alone,
And floating on a wave of sand.
But still his mind its traffic turns
Away from beach and tree and stone
To kindred clamour close at hand.

(Ibid, 117)

City 13

In the poem 'A Morning Walk', a glimpse of the material city culture can be seen through the following lines:

Barbaric city sick with slums
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains
Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged,
Processions led by frantic drums,
A million purgatorial lanes,
And child-like masses, many-tongued
Whose wages are in words and crumbs.

(Ibid, 119)

The images in the above mentioned lines convey the self-complacency of the middle class people. Here the poet ridicules the consumerist culture. This consumerism compels men to spend money on luxury goods instead of educational needs.

The upper and the lower middle class city people, even the ordinary people are tempted by the dance bars where the non drinkers take a step forward and start drinking the non-smokers
enjoy smoking. Images of such people who tried to imitate the western culture occupy some of Ezekiel's poems.

Ezekiel tries to create a picture of a man, who wants to run away from the city's turmoil, but does not know where he should go. The life in the city seems him rootless. The poet's subconscious is influenced by the inexplicable spell of the artificial city. The physical world around him varies from 'Slum to Sky-scrapers', it spares him in no way. As Balram Gupta (July 2004:2) rightly observes:

“Ezekiel is deeply rooted in the Indian soil. His growth of mind is helped by un-habitable condition of the city. If Wordsworth could measure his life with 'Mountains and Valleys' and T.S. Eliot with 'Coffee Spoons' then Ezekiel does so with slums and sky scrapers.”

Ezekiel's Bombay is located in the present and like William Paterson it lacks the historical dimension. In fact, for both William and Ezekiel, their respective cities as well as their poems are expressions of the same agitation and unrealized experience.

It is fascinating to find out what is distinctive in Ezekiel's treatment of Bombay. In a special sense, it is different from William's treatment of his city. For Bombay is a hybrid colonial city and in it are incarnate all the tensions and horrors generated by a cultural encounter gone sour. It is peopled by a race spawned by itself. Ezekiel's originality lies in his projection of Bombay as a metaphor which defines the alienation of the modern Indian intellectual, brought up in the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman

traditions and being forced to come to terms with a culture whose response to life is controlled by a totally different metaphysics.

**City 14**

Ezekiel is a man without a past trapped in a city that has no past and where there is only an illusion of order derived from its colonial genesis. Both the poet and the city are creations of the same historical forces. Talking about his oneness with the city, J. Birje Patil (In Narsimhaiah C.D. adn Srinath C.N., 1999:209) says:

"The city is as much within him as without. It is this apprehension which makes Ezekiel’s city poems unique."

Ezekiel laughs at the typical middle class mentality of taking a pride in material comforts and possessions – In one of his *Very Indian Poems in Indian English* he makes a retired professor say:

> By God's grace, all my children  
> Are well settled in life  
> One is Sales Manager,  
> One is Bank Manager,  
> Both have Cars.  

(Ezekiel, 1989: 239)

**City 15**

For the poet, the city people look like *ghosts*. They have lost their personal identity. Ezekiel comes very close to T.S. Eliot’s ‘Hollow-men’, when he describes the middle aged men with the image ‘Men of Straw’ in *Morning Walk*:

> The middle of his journey nears  
> Is he among the men of straw  
> Who think they go which way they please?  

(Ezekiel, 1989: 119)
Here the poet intends to highlight the aimlessness and rootlessness of the people of urban area.

**City 16**

Ezekiel makes a fine use of image: "His will is like the morning dew" (Ibid, 120). The great harm that the city does is that it reduces every person to a procrustean bed. The idea of individuals getting suffocated in a narrow space is expressed through a time image.

**City 17**

The imagery of enclosed space, however, figures quite often. The unsuccessful rape attempt in 'In India' takes place in a large apartment:

At the second meeting  
In the large apartment  
After cold beer and the music on,  
She sat in disarray  
(Ibid, 133)

**City 18**

The newly weds in 'Jewish Wedding in Bombay' sleep in the kitchen. In this poem the poet brings out a typical Indian image with respect to the scarcity of enough space for the people in certain mass gatherings.

...............Still later,  
we lay on a floor-mattress in the kitchen of my wife's family apartment and though it was past midnight, she Kept saying let's do it darling, let's do it darling so we did it.  
(Ibid, 235)
City 19

An analysis of Nissim Ezekiel's city images will prove that the purity of the poet's being is contaminated to a large extent by these city images. The image of city in Nissim Ezekiel is undoubtedly stark. Some times it becomes more than an image. It is transformed into a symbol of decomposed garbage. The city is infected or its system of living is corroded and shattered at the very core. The poet seems failed to discover the city as a place where purity and goodness can be found. On the contrary he is subjected to find the city as a dehumanized place or an internal abode:

Most of the critics seem to agree that Ezekiel’s poetry is a personal quest for identity, commitment and harmony in life. He is,

"An endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delving and twisting of the ego, and the ceaseless attempt of man and poet to define himself, to find through all ‘The myth and maze, a way to honesty and love.’"

(Hess Linda, 1966: 30-31)

To find a way amidst the ‘Myth and Maze’, the poet cannot neglect the physical or material realities of life. Basically City, Woman, Nature and the allied images constitute the physical word of Ezekiel.
3.5 Sensuous Images

Sensuous: Space: 1
The drawing room in 'Preferences' blisters with conversation.
......it was firmly held to a drawing room
blistering with conversation courteous in its tyranny,
so affectionate that I was beaten down to it,
weighed in measured tones and tidily assigned a place,
a role to play.

(Ezekiel, 1989:32)

Sensuous: Space:2
The speaker's awkward prose is mis-spelt by diffidence in
drawing rooms in 'The Language of Lovers',
The lover's natural language is prose,
I turned to poetry for consolation
Prodigious music of our silences
Dry throated suffering and helplessness
This is the natural language of love.

(Ibid:111)

Sensuous: Space: 3
In 'A Poem of Dedication' the poet feels that "The View from
basement rooms is rather small" (Ibid-39)

Sensuous: Space: 4
The space image is more effective in the poem 'The Room'.
The images in this poem could be better understood if the total
poem is quoted:

To live in this
without a fever or exaggeration
proves beyond my means
my ready cash of doctrine
and deliberation. The door
is always open
but I cannot leave
I mock myself here
as if my very existence
is presumption. One cannot stare for long
at nothing or contemplate a view
where only obstacles reflect
the view within. I have to name a new
the things I see
There are too many contradictions and books,
too much love and not enough love,
the attempt to dance
without learning to walk.
Arranged and rearranged,
the room is always the same.
its shadows shift about restlessly
and fall into different patterns:
the light is unsteady, thin and flat.
Yet some events are to happen here
not of moods only but of visions.
For this the room is not yet ready.

(Ibid, 207)

Sensuous: Space: 5

The space image reiterates poet’s disillusionment with the
urban culture and its life style. In ‘Minority Poems’, the speaker talks
to his invisible guests:

In my room, I talk
to my invisible guests:
they do not argue, but wait

(Ibid, 236)

Sensuous: Space: 6

The 20th Section of: Edinburgh Interlude is entitled ‘A Little Room’.

I did not expect
to fall in love
with a little room.

(Ibid, 292)
Sensuous: Sound: 1

In Ezekiel’s poetry the sound imagery is not found strong. There are some references to music. In the poem *Speech and Silence* uneasy croaking, ‘whirr of wings’: “and echoes of our casual wrongs” (c.p.53) find its place.

Sensuous: Sound: 2

The largest part of the sound imagery in Ezekiel’s poetry consists of the imagery of music. In the very first page of his book, in the poem ‘A Time to Change’ the poet comes with beautiful spiritual image of music:

But when the mind determines everything
The leap is never made, the music
Never quite completed, redemption
Never fully won.

(Ibid, 3)

Sensuous: Sound: 3

In the last verse paragraph of the fourth section of the poem “To a Certain Lady’ love is asked to teach us love, above all things “fidelity to music” (Ibid,30)

Sensuous: Sound: 4

The penultimate section of ‘The Prophet’ speaks of the ‘Distinctive music of an individual mind imitated by many men’.

(Ibid, 33)
Sensuous: Sound: 5

The poem *Episode* brings out the image of sound in the form of howling like a sick dog towards the moon:

A beggar's *whine* approached,.....
.........
And *howled* like a sick dog towards the moon. (Ibid, 99)

Sensuous: Sound: 6,7,8

The moaning of the sea in *Song of Desolation*, heard the sea moon (Ibid, 103), the voice of thunder in *Enterprise*: ignoring what the *thunder meant* (Ibid,118)’ and of beggars and hawkers in *A Morning Walk* as hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged (Ibid,119) makes much of its fabric.

Sensuous: Sound: 9

In *At the party* we are told that ‘parties have a perilous music’ (Ibid, 98)

Sensuous: Sound: 10

In *For love's record* the speaker hears ‘the *music* of her quickened breath’ (Ibid,110).

Sensuous: Sound: 11

The images of music are opulent in the poem for her:

The *song* of deeds across the way
In March or July finds me still
Unready, in your binding arms.

(Ibid, 67)
**Sensuous: Sound: 12**

In ‘Division’ the speaker hears his heart singing of blessedness upon a nuptial day. And heard it sing of blessedness upon a nuptial day. (Ibid, 87). Ezekiel sometimes juxtaposes the sound imagery, in various forms and silence.

**Sensuous: Sound: 13**

In ‘The Language of Lovers’ the poet speaks of the “Prodigious music of our silences (Ibid, 111).

**Sensuous: Sound: 14**

We find a little difference between speech and silence. All speech is to one self. No one can fully understand other man’s speech. The poem Speech and Silence admits this fact frankly:

> Man is alone and cannot tell  
> The simplest thing to any friend  
> All speech is to oneself, others  
> Overhear and miss the meaning.

(Ibid, p.53)

**Sensuous: Light: 1**

Apart from Ezekiel’s sound imagery we have a number of examples showing Ezekiel’s skill in using the light imagery. In his early poem A Time to Change the poet describes the legend of birth as bright as the poet ponders over birth as a process of illumination:

> And metaphors  
> Insight illumination  
> Secret faults concealed no more.

(Ibid, p.6)

Sensuous: Light: 2

The image of light as a powerful source of unveiling, exposing, and expounding is powerfully highlighted by Ezekiel in the poem *Morning Prayer* as the poet appeals to the light as follows:

Light, Light, Light,
Unveil, expose, expound
Your metaphors of meaning
And let them know lucidity
White wings of morning.

(Ibid, p.20)

Ezekiel gives more importance to the sensual side of the human beings. He could understand the meaning of the epic by name ‘Life’. The sensuous images in the poem ‘Conclusion’ gives a delicate and playful touch to the very meaning of life which is rather told in serious tones by other authors:

The true business of living is seeing, touching, kissing
The epic of walking in the street and loving on the bed.

(Ibid, p.97)

3.6 Physical Images

3.6.1 Physical Objects

Physical: Street: 1

Ezekiel uses appropriate images to bring out the essence of the ideas he wanted to convey. The image of ‘Pandemonium in the poem, ‘Encounter’ is taken directly from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Ezekiel maintains that the streets in the city have now been changed into the places for the ‘Gundas’. They execute their cold commands on these streets of pandemonium. Milton’s
'Pandemonium' is a place, where Satan used to give commands to his followers. In the same fashion the image of 'Pandemonium' in this poem has evil connotations. As the poet says:

> Within the pandemonium of the street I felt his voice, like a command.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 34)

**Physical: Bus: 2**

The image of 'bus' in the poem 'Encounter' has a metaphorical significance. It conveys the general monotony, irresponsible behaviour of the masses:

> Many men, like buses on a fixed route and buses jerking away like drunken men.

(Ibid, 35)

Ezekiel is successful in conveying the exact mood or attitude through his apt use of images. He achieves the emotional precision and physical evocation that is needed in the best poetry. His images express the exact content of his ideas, his mood and attitude; which is a sign of good poetry. As, Gokal, V.K., (1975: 133) rightly observes:

> "In most poetic images and in the best poetry, there is always an emotional precision. The image expresses exactly the mood or attitude, not a shade more nor less. An image also brings out a sharp physical evocation."

**Physical: Culture: 3**

The physical images pertaining to the Indian culture, sensibility bring out collectively, the image of India. In the poem,
Very Indian Poems in English' the following lines are evocative of such an image:

I am standing for peace and non-violence.
Why world is fighting, fighting
Why all people of world
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi
I am simply not understanding
Ancient Indian Wisdom is 100% correct
I should say even 200% correct.
But modern generation is neglecting
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.

(Ezekiel, 1989:237)

**Physical: India: 4**

The image of 'Gandhi's India' is at the zenith in the above lines. Ezekiel also gives a high respect to this land as being once the place of Ram Rajya: an Ideal Kingdom of King Rama. His assurance of the arrival of 'Ram Rajya' seems to show the optimistic Indian masses who believe in the good morals:

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I am saying (to myself)
Lend me the ears.
Everything is coming—
Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception
Be patiently, brothers and sisters.

One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.

(Ibid)

Ezekiel’s poetic images stand out for their thought oriented nature mostly bearing the physical Indian tradition. He is basically the thinker of the human conditions and human predicament especially in the urban setting. In all respects, he was an unfinished man and he was aware of it more than anybody else. One might call him a poet of city but one cannot ignore him by saying that he is just that.
His poetry bears the Indian content. As Raghu A., (2002:132) Says:

“Perhaps Ezekiel’s greatest achievement has been his success in encouraging the Indian content in his poetry to sprout roots into the physical reality of the country.”

In the poem Occupation a long stretch of light shoots up at the speaker. ‘A long stretch of light shooting up at me’ (Ezekiel, 1989:24). There are lumino sites hidden in the words of the homespun parable in the poem Scriptures:

The home-spun parable of husbandmen and servants, scattered seeds, foolish virgins, erring sons, is full of subtleties. Hidden on its words are luminosities

(Ezekiel, 1989:49).

**Physical: Middle Class: 5**

The image of the common city people is prevalent in Ezekiel’s poetry. In the poem “The Railway Clerk”, the poet, with apt images, creates the image of a typical middle class bureaucrat irritated by the ever increasing demands of his wife and the comparatively less salary to fulfil her demands. The persona in this poem represents an honest employee amidst a group of corrupt people intoxicated by the modern materialistic culture:

“My wife is always asking for more money. Money, money, where to get money? My job is such; no one is giving bribe. While other clerks are in fortunate position, And no promotion even because I am not graduate.

(Ibid. p.184)
Physical: Monkey Charmer: 6

The image of 'the monkey charmer' is made more emphatic in the poem 'Entertainment'. The master of the show uses many tricks to call the attention of the people. He beats the drum, he also cracks the whip:

Naked to the waist,
the Master of Ceremonies
drums frenzy, cracks whip,
calls the tricks
to earn applause and copper coins
the circle thickens as the plot thickens.

(Ibid, 193)

Physical: Pseudo-Modern: 7

One part of the poem 'In India' presents the image of Pseudo-modern Indians leading fashionable lives in the cities:

The Anglo-Indian gentlemen
Drank whisky in some Jewish den
With Muslim slowly creeping in
Before or after prayers.

(Ibid, p.132)

It remained a constant quest of the poet to depict the physical world around him. While depicting the physical world; he abruptly goes deep in the spirituality. He enters into the soul of his own to search. In the process of this physical and spiritual dilemma the cultural heritage of India's surrounding world is presented. It is quite common on the part of the poet that his imagery springs out from the physical world around him. The culture in which he grows, as M.K. Naik (In Prasad, 1983:34) rightly says,
"But since a poet's imagery springs from his own experience, the Indian Poet's world of imagery will naturally be dominated by his own cultural heritage."

As the poet is haunted by the city Bombay with all its material realities, he is no less haunted by the woman, the God's wonderful creation. The image of woman in Ezekiel's poetry appears in many shades. The woman appears in many forms as a mother, a wife, a seductress, mistress, a whore and a sex object in Ezekiel's various collections. About this, Lai E.N., (1983: 65-66) says that:

"Woman has been one of Nissim Ezekiel" major preoccupations in sizeable portion of his poetry in one way or other, be it as a pagan woman or description of instinctual urges. There have been some isolated endeavours to study the image of woman as reflected in his poetry."

3.6.2 Images of Women and Body

Physical: Woman: 1

Ezekiel has successfully brought out the images of human beings with their vices and virtues. In the poem 'On Bellasis Road', the image of a woman with coloured garments is portrayed:

I see her first
as colours only,
poised against the faded
red of a post-box
purples sari, yellow blouse,
green bangles, orange
flowers in her hair

(Ezekiel, 1989:188)
Physical: Woman: 2

But later on the poet sees the image of the same woman as if through a telescope, ultimately to face despair:

I see her image now
as through a telescope,
without single
desperate moral
to keep in focus
...........................................
perhaps it is a kind of despair.

(Ibid, 189)

Physical: Muslim Girl: 3

The rhythm of the life in city is well caught by Ezekiel through the creation of one more image that belongs to the common people. The orthodox Muslim girl and her parents in, "How the English lesson ended" show the poet’s skill. The poet has depicted the life of the common people in the city through apt images. The picture of the Muslim girl who, according to the poet, is only good at giggling:

She’s very serious – for ten minutes,
Then she smiles, and smiles some more
In half an hour she giggles. I learn
Giggling is what she’s really good at,
With plenty of practice, not at home.

(Ibid, 200)

Physical: Woman: 4

The image of woman remained ambivalent and paradoxical in Indian context. As for Bhartrhari once said that there is no nectar or poison except a fair hipped woman. She is both binder, devourer as well as delighter. She appears in the two forms of Goddess "Jagad"
and "amba". Ezekiel too regards woman as an object of nature meant for enjoyment of man:

That women, trees, tables, waves and birds
Buildings, stones, steamrollers,
Cats and clocks,
Are here to be enjoyed.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 96)

The image of woman is to be studied in a detailed manner because the one image may evoke hundreds of other allied physical or material images that pertain to the woman and her cosmos.

**Physical: The Female Body: 5**

The poet is very typical in solving the mystery of the particular shape and structure of the female body. According to the poet the limbs of the women's body are made in such a way that they may lock and make it easy to love:

I see you here, stretched out,
not as complex-pulls and tensions,
muscle, bone, skin, resilience
but as person, always
human in your naked
unposed poses, resisting form

(Ibid, 249)

**Physical: Woman: 6**

Ezekiel depicts women as sinful creature only as a result of the horrors of the metropolitan city. The city is indifferent, lifeless and inhuman to the women. His 'Love Song', presents this defilement:

You are city-cramped, my love
Only flesh remains what it was meant to be

(Ibid, 74)
Physical: Woman: 7

In the Indian context woman is equated with material world (Prakriti) Liberation was sought – of spirit from matter, of male from female and of 'Purusha from Prakriti'. The ancient Sanskrit poets, very often, equated women with nature and described her body through images from nature. Ezekiel too described the female binder as Prakriti:

Hills, Valleys, Swelling river banks
all those landscape images
... Praise of breasts and buttocks
seen as fruit, thighs as tree trunks
Flower, man, Fire, bird of desire...

(Ibid, 249)

Physical: Female: 8

The poem 'Something to Pursue' comes with a different female image. According to the poet, Liberation can only be possible when:

...The female animal no longer haunts
The bed in flesh or dream.

(Ezekiel, 1989:18)

Physical: Woman: 9

Despite the sin with which the woman is associated, Ezekiel remains a poet of female body. If at all the poet admits that it is the passion poem from Sanskrit poetry, which influenced him, we find that all the time he is aware of female body. Ezekiel has a typical zest of describing the sensuality evoked by the female body. In the poem 'Motives' we have the following description of her body -

Your skin is white
But black or grey
Would be just as well
The eyes are large
So are the breasts
... Your thighs are full and round
Thin and flat I would love them too.

(Ibid, p.154)

Physical: Woman: 10

The poet has not spared a single physical aspect of the women's body. The poem 'Description' comes with a very sensual description of the mysterious sprouting of hair on different parts of the body. The voluptuous growth of hair on her head first then downward in the pit of arms and finally rests on the wondrous pubic hair:

I will begin – but how should I begin?
With hair, your hair,
remembered hair,
touched, smelt, lying silent there
upon your head, beneath your arms,
and then between your thighs a wonder
of hair, secret
in light and in darkness
bare, suffering with joy.
kisses light as air.

(Ibid, p.48)

Physical: Woman: 11

Nissim Ezekiel has pictured all sorts of women – "Shop Assistant, mistress of the old clothes man, steno-typist Chauffeur's daughter" (Ezekiel, 1953: 31).
Physical: Woman: 12

In the second anthology, sixty poems, not only the external parts but her organs too are described.

Listen to the secret marrow
*Lung* and *Liver* speak the word
Accept the long tormented breath
And Tremble in the thick of love.

(Ezekiel, 1953: 6)

The biological images of "Lung", "Liver" convey a wide range of experience of the poet.

Ezekiel gives all the details of the feminine anatomy. The present exploration has a sexual undertone and with Ezekiel's use of apt and concrete images the description becomes more graphic. In passion poems the female body is evocative of different women Images.

Physical: Woman: 13

The sensuous images like 'the perfume of your breath' and 'the faint odour of your skin' are evocative of the 'Olfactory' senses of the human beings. Not only her body, but even her breath and odour of skin are important.

Physical: Woman: 14

In another poem 'On Bellasis Road' the poet first observes the different colours of Bangles that she is wearing and the flavours in her hair, and then like a lover he denudes her in his mind and sees her body:
I see her first
as colours only,
poised against the faded
red of a post box;
purple saree, yellow blouse,
green bangles, orange
flowers in her hair
A moment later
I sense her as a woman.
bare as her feet
beneath the shimmer.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 188)

The colours of the different wearing of the women evoke the
image of a woman clad with jewels and beneath her shimmer. She
is bare feet.

**Physical: Woman's Body: 15**

Ezekiel seems very much fascinated by the female body. The
particular shape of the woman's body parts such as breast,
buttocks, thighs, limbs lured him.

And breasts, thighs, buttocks
Swinging
Now towards
Now away from me.

(Ibid, 220)

Ezekiel's description of the female body, makes us know that
he follows the Sanskrit love poets in this regard. The charm or the
beauty of the women lies in their impersonality. This impersonality
makes these women types. The eroticians of the past describe
various types of women classified on the basis of their love making.

The image of hair is infinitely beautiful. It acquires a particular
force in the specific context of the poem. He considers this image
with a touch of wonder and recalls in turn, the other constituents of
the human anatomy – 'head', 'arms', and 'thighs' where they spring.
In all such poems the poet appears to be neutral, engaged in
watching the Splendour of the human figure.

**Physical: Female: 16**

Elsewhere, as in 'The Female Image' he moves a step forward
and reflects on the possibility of sexual participation.

She lies, the female image
On the lonely pillow, in the single room
Incessantly reborn, rolling the senses
Down through several circles to the solid-ice
And empty places of fancy rise for her,
This harlot of a dream
Shall her belly know the lust of man?

(Ibid, 68)

However there seems a touch of prejudice in Ezekiel's poetry
regarding the depiction of female body. In fact he makes the use of
the words such as 'breasts' 'buttocks' and 'nakedness' etc. with an
ease but points his finger towards the Sanskrit poets, and says how
freely they make the use of the words like 'breasts' and 'buttocks'.

Well, Kalidas and Bhavabhuti do many other things besides
mentioning uninhibitedly 'breasts and buttocks'. But it is quite
surprising that our foremost poet has eyes only for those anatomical
features and none for the technical excellencies like, for instance,
Kalidas's use of the seminal 'bee-lotus' image in Shakuntal. As V.M.
observes:

"What has Ezekiel to show which can go anywhere near such intensely realized imagery? And as for his own self declared inhibitions. One has only to feed the text of his collected poems to the computer and find out the frequency and ease with which words like 'nakedness', 'naked woman' 'nudes', 'breasts' occur and how thigh fall part and centre cannot hold."

**Physical: Woman: 17**

Ezekiel's descriptions of women include 'a numerous types'

Ezekiel's women can be placed in the following categories. A woman as a bashful conquette finds its place in some of Ezekiel's poems. In 'Nudes-12' we have a miniature in motion.

Let us call her the shy one
She came with gifts, shyly
after two letters and a short
telephone call. Her talk presumed
a certain distance .... and she said as she
undressed me, I would never
have made the first move, I'm too shy.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 251)

**Physical: Woman: 18**

The image of a 'bashful coquette' had been the major concern of Indian Sanskrit poetry. Ezekiel continued the tradition with variation. The poem 'Hymns in Darkness' portrays a woman who constantly shouts contempt for the act of love but desires the same at the core. The woman in this poem says 'No' to the act of love but desires it all the way.

Don't, she says, don't
Conniving all the same
Short of tearing her clothes.
he is using all his force

(Ibid, 221)
Physical: Woman: 19

A slight contrasting image of a 'bashful coquette' is described in the poem 'On giving reasons' which is the fourth section of Passion Poems:

She gave me
six good reasons
for saying No
and then
for no reason at all
dropped all her reason
with her clothes.

(Ibid, 215)

The image pictured in the above lines is contrary to the image pictured by Indian Sanskrit poets. Ezekiel's woman seems to be more bold and modern in her attitude towards sex. She seems motivated by the modern bar culture which may arouse the sensual instinct.

Physical: Woman: 20

The image of an adulterous woman is described by Ezekiel in the poem 'Monsoon'.

You arrived
with saree clinging
to your breasts and hips.

(Ibid, 214)

Here the association of 'Monsoon' with carnal love is significant as it implies that just as the Monsoon rains in India are essential for the preservation and continuity of life so is 'Carnal Love' in the relationship between Man and Woman.
Physical: Woman: 21

It is obvious from Ezekiel’s woman images that the woman appears and reappears in Ezekiel’s poetry in as many roles as possible. But basically she is projected either as a wife or as a whore in most of Ezekiel’s poems. Apart from that she is also depicted as a mother or as a working woman and in a number of ways, as in *Poster Poems*.

Physical: Woman: 22

The poem ‘Episode’ brings out the images of woman in a unique way:

- Shop assistant, steno-typist
- Chauffeur’s daughter, mistress
- Of the old clothes man, feeder
- Of the milkman’s nightly fancies,
- Formed an image
- Which I carried home
- And on my lips a hurricane
- Of Helen’s kisses.

(Ibid, 69)

Ezekiel’s poetry deprives of the so called charm of a woman for which the art of poetry is known. But it must be admitted that he is very sincere and realistic in exploring a certain character of the woman. The poet doesn’t dwell upon the role of a woman as a daughter, a sister, a beloved, an intellectual and rational, queer and innocent woman of country side in the nature’s lap, but on the other side he finds her as a mistress, seductress a sex object or as a cabaret dancer. She appears only as a variant of these two major roles. As A.R. Singh (In Sharma T.R., 1994: 182) rightly says,
"The picture of woman that emerges from his poems is a ‘bleak’ and ‘negative’ as expressed in a couple of poems. He sees again and again as an object of sex, an annoying truth and an invariably impending menace impending the person's moral voyage."

The woman is pictured as an object that is only made for the sake of enjoyment.

**Physical: Woman: 23**

Ezekiel has treated woman as an active principle of the cosmos. Her love seems to transcend the conventionalities and assumes dynamism. It is a woman who guides her man into the depths of flesh. The image of such a woman is conveyed in the poem 'Nudes 1978'.

```
...............Put your finger there, she pleads, as if,
I need instructions. It is only
Impatience, though becoming frenzy
..........................................................

'Now' she claims,
you are within me.
```

(Ezekiel, 1989: 246)

**Physical: Woman: 24**

Woman in such cases appear as an image of an initiatress:

`You haven't learnt to kiss', she said
'Open your mouth a little, yes,
'That's the way ...'`

(Ibid)

**Physical: Woman: 25**

Ezekiel has portrayed a woman who takes every assault actively. Her sensuality is egocentric and acquisitive. The conspicuous flesh is uninhibited:
... Threshing thighs and breasts
That bear the weight of me with spirit
Light and free

The threshing thighs, the singing breasts,
Exhausted by the act, desiring it again.

(Ibid, 47)

Physical: Woman: 26

Most of the times Ezekiel's woman is experienced and knows what to do with her limbs:

He will watch the virgin
Wear his fever, wait or turn
Arrange her limbs as he desires.

(Ibid, 68)

Physical: Woman: 27

Here is the image of a wanton woman that shows a due response to the beastly sensuality of her 'Man'. She, gropes, grabs and groans, but still accepts everything finally.

'Is this a part of you?' She asks, as she holds it, stares at it. Then she laughs....

(Ibid, 246)

Physical: Woman: 28

Sometimes the woman becomes audacious to tell the man that she loves his body but he is not her type:

Did you enjoy it? No? You have to love the other person, then you do. Never mind, you love my breasts, thighs, buttocks, don’t you? Of course you do It’s OK, you know, and I love your body too, though you’re hardly my cup of tea.

(Ibid)
Physical: Woman: 29

In describing a married woman, Ezekiel depicts his own unhappy married life. According to him the women are real binders and killers of joy. In the poem, 'Song to be Shouted Out'. The poet creates an image of a woman who irritates her husband by asking him a hundreds of question when comes back from office. The irritation of the husband is enough to paint the image of a typical woman.

Shout at me, woman!
What else are wives for?

(Ibid, 242)

Physical: Woman: 30

Apart from the above images, we find, at a large scale, the image of a pagan woman in his poetry. The image of a pagan woman occurs in almost every anthology of Ezekiel.

Such a woman is associated with defilement. She is emotionless, false pretender without any warmth. The poet himself confesses,

'There is a frequent focusing on and preoccupation with pagan woman in my poetry'.

(Raheman, 1981: 36)

Physical: Woman: 31

In the very first collection, 'A Time to Change' the poet’s effort to project his ideal woman fails. 'An affair' of the first collection evokes. The image of a woman as a false pretender:
And then she said: I love you, just like this.
As I had seen the yellow blondes declare
Upon the screen, and even stroked my hair
But hates me now because I did not kiss.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 11)

**Physical: Woman: 32**

*The stroking of hair* suggests an act of plastic pretension without a real warmth. In the poem ‘Event’ of *The Unfinished Man* once again this lack of warmth and artificiality is brought out.

She stroked my hair and talked away
About a film she had admired.
A speech she heard the other day
And art of which she never tired.
She thought that I expected this
So, with her love, She offered it.

(Ibid, 123)

**Physical: Woman: 33**

The same pretentious woman pictured in a rather different way in the poem *Situation* in *Sixty Poems*. The woman is a by product of indifferent, callous, rotten city, is again stressed:

She tried her best to make me understand
Her voice was intimately soft, one hand
From time to time caressed the air and made
Each point a confidence, the other laid
Unconscious (Of course) upon my knee.

(Ibid, 43)

**Physical: Woman: 34**

The image of a pretentious woman and her artificial manner is highlighted more effectively in the poem *At the Party* Here we are exposed with a city woman who has lost her innocence and lacks
emotional warmth. What is left of her in this wasteland of the metropolis is her sensual self. She does her best to make use of it.

Ethereal beauties, may you always be
Dedicate to love and reckless shopping
Your midriffs moist and your thighs unruly
Breasts beneath the fabric slyly plopping.

(Ibid, 98)

The above lines also make a mention of certain body images like 'Moist midriff' and 'unruly thighs', and 'slyly plopping breasts'.

**Physical: Woman: 35**

A strictly mechanical image is conveyed in the poem 'For Love’s Record'. Here a woman is pictured in such a way that her love is mechanical. It seems to be an image of a detached woman making love like a machine.

I let her go who gave but would not bind
She grew in love abandoning her ties
No mater how they loved she put them by.

(Ibid, 111)

**Physical: Woman: 36-37**

The image of a woman with external and internal sweetness is pictured in the poem 'Good bye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.

Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
even for no reason
but simply because she is feeling
she is most popular lady
With men also and ladies also

Pushpa Miss is never saying no
Whatever I or anybody is asking
She is always saying yes.

(Ezekiel, 1989:190-91)

Miss Pushpa's innocence, grace, her smiling nature, her mingling with men and women and her ever positive attitude is noteworthy.

**Physical: Woman: 38**

Ezekiel comes out with a sharp contrast with his portrait of a woman as a 'great woman beast of sex' when he talks of an innocent woman who is charged of prostitution.

In the poem 'Virginal' he creates the image of a love starved spinster whose fate fills the heart of the poet with sadness:

> You were not made to love like this although
> Your face suggests that you are reconciled
> Its gentle sadness as it slowly grew
> And crushed your loveliness, oppressed me too
> The universe is much too small to hold.
> Your longing for a lover and a child.

_Ezekiel, 1989: 139_

**Physical: Woman: 39**

Ezekiel has placed woman on high pedestal of Indian Motherhood in the poem 'Night of the Scorpion' The image of Ideal Indian Mother is evoked in this poem when the mother thanks god for picking her on and sparing her children:

> My mother only said:
> Thank God the Scorpion picked on me
> and spared my children.

_(Ibid, 131)_
Physical: Woman: 40

The same pious and positive image of Indian Woman is seen in the poem 'The Couple'. Here the poet shows a positive attitude towards the female sex. He reiterates what has been said so many times by so many people.

His love is small
A flickering lamp
While hers lights up
The Universe.

(Ibid, 216)

Physical: Woman: 41

The image of 'divine love' of Radha & Krishna expressed in the Indian myth is handled with an admirable delicacy by Ezekiel. 'The Passion Poems' bring out this image of immortal divine love as:

Krishna's tricks
are not for him
nor Radha's wiles
for her
they have a different truth
within a kingdom of their own.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 215)

Here the poet evokes the unnamed attraction, called love, as an invisible force which leads the lovers to the destination, a truth which has different connotations from person to person.

Physical: Woman: 42

Poet's concept of a woman's body as a binding force gets a sudden shift as we find that at least once she is presented in a different light. The profane is raised to the level of the scared-
I counted two hundred thrusts, 
then fell asleep upon you. Waking, 

Your body had an inner light 
for me to contemplate. I knew 
each part but now I saw 
the sacramental pattern, soul 
inviolate within all that 
pure being flowing from its source.

(Ibid, 250)

In the above lines the poet reaches to a higher level of 
cosmic significance. The profane and sacred are mingled together. 
The spirit is reflected through flesh, matter but senses make sense. 
The poet seems to endow the women with ‘God’s plenty’. It is an 
undeniable fact that the poetry of Ezekiel is overweighed by the 
eroticism but in this regard the poet seems to have imitated the 
Sanskrit love poets of the past. His own marital failure looms large 
in his subconscious. His quest for an ideal woman fails and most 
often leaves her in the rotten city of defilement and corruption, 
another wasteland as Lal, E.N.(1987: 63) rightly says:

“Woman, it has been noted appears in different forms 
and images in Ezekiel’s poetry.”

However, Ezekiel’s concern seems to direct him to the 
essence of the images of woman concerning man-woman 
relationship. Ezekiel tries to extract through this the mysteries of 
human existence.

Physical: Woman: 43

Occasionally, Ezekiel concentrates on the physical organs of the female, such as breasts, buttocks, thighs, and hair. Take the following as an illustration:

And breasts, thighs, buttocks
swinging
now towards
now away from him.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 220)

Physical: Woman: 44

The images of typical body posture of a woman is described with a skill in following lines:

I want you back
With the rough happiness you lightly wear
Supported by your shoulders
Breasts and thighs.

(Ibdi, 196)

Such physical details of a woman only add to the eroticism and beastly urban atmosphere of the poems concerned.

Physical: Woman: 45

The first section of 'To a Certain Lady' evokes the image of a woman who bears that virginal coyness. It also brings out the woman's definition of life within this new relationship:

Life can be kept alive
By contact with the unknown and strange,
A feeling for the mystery
Of man and woman joined, exhaustion
At the act, desire for it again,
By contact with the commonplace,
A feeling for the touch of wood and water
The sight of pictures on the wall
Books, carpets, curtains, glass,
The simple things that make a home.

(Ibid, 28)

Physical: Woman: 46

Ezekiel's poems exhibit a rare glimpse of the woman as a Harlot. Such a woman is the symbol of defilement. This appears in most of his anthologies.

A slight different image of woman is conveyed in the further part of the same poem. The poetic lines resemble epithalamion and have a very suggestive typographical arrangement.

A quiet woman
Stands by me
While the seasons, come and go
Flow phoenix love
And constant be
While the turtle's
Voice is heard
For we are young
And we are wed
Smell of myrrh
Spikenard.

(Ibid)

Physical: Woman: 47

In 'The Language of Lovers' the poet evokes the image of a woman as a seductress who causes ruin. Here the poet brings out the image of a woman with a destructive power like a 'sorceress'.

Poetry, some foolish critic said,
Is the natural language of Loves
Looking at her destroyed even my prose.

(Ibid, 111)
In most poems the woman is pictured as a mere sex object. In this role woman is divested of the active power she enjoyed as seductress and is circumscribed by a passivity that is unacceptable to feminists.

Physical: Woman: 48

In ‘Encounter’ woman is seen as a receptacle for Man’s passion. Such is the case in ‘Aside’ too:

One cannot imagine
Elephants making love,
But it seems they do
So also tortoises
And snails,
Or even other men
With women doing
What it seems they do.

(Ibid, 93)

Physical: Woman: 49

In ‘The Queue’ the poet endorses this image when the persons says:

Her skin is warm and golden brown–
Unhurriedly I catch the bus
Must move along on, without much fuss.

(Ibid, 96)

Physical: Woman: 50

In the poem ‘At the Party’ a sensuous image of a woman is pictured. It is an image which the poet has viewed through the eyes of the male protagonist.
Physical: Woman: 51

In the poem 'At the Hotel' the poet has evoked the image of a woman that arouses the sexual instinct of the human beings. The persona narrates very frankly the motives, which were concealed. They were there in the hotel not for a cup of coffee but to see the naked Cuban Dancer. The specialty of Ezekiel is that a number of images revolve around the principle axis of the central image.

Physical: Woman: 52

The physical world in the coffee house culture in the Metro cities of India is viewed through this image:

Our motives were concealed but clear, not coffee but the Cuban Dancer took us there, On the dot she came and shook her breasts, all over us and dropped the thin transparent skirt she wore was it not this for which we came? The noise, the smoke, the smell of flesh we relished Secretly, and wanted more, we drank our coffee swiftly when the Cuban Dancer left the floor the Naked Cuban Dancer Our motives were concealed but clear.

(Ibid, 112)

Physical: Woman: 53

The image of woman as a whore is portrayed in the poem 'Progress':

Now he wears a thicker skin, upgraded from the goddesses of virtue to mocking, sexual eyes whose hunger makes him wise.

(Ibid, 141)
Ezekiel projects a negative image of a woman in the poem ‘A Woman Observed’. The woman here seems to be visibly conscious of the pregnant woman’s sexuality. She is surprised at the prudishness on viewing nude-statues and art paintings. She is conscious of what she has known in real life. I would quote the entire poem to show how the pregnant woman’s reactions project a negative image of woman:

The pregnant woman
in the art gallery
stares at the nudes
that line the neutral wall
her consternation
frightens me. The fear
of nakedness offends
the eye. I am ashamed
To witness it...

she leaves the place, my eyes
embracing all that sensual
movement bursting through the dress.

(Ibid, 140)

Physical: Woman: 54

The image of woman as a sex object remains with Ezekiel all the while. In ‘Twenty Four Lines’ we observe the persistence of this image:

We stood face to face
but she looked down
desire was naked
in my glance
it stripped her
of all pretence.

(Ibid, 160)
Physical: Woman: 55

A rather shocking imagery finds its place when the poet talks honestly about his married life as an utter failure. As usual, the statements and remarks he puts into the mouths of his women persona in the poem *Nudes 1978* in 'Latter Day Psalms' (especially II, III and XII of L.D.P.) depict them as lustful and fickle. One of them asks during their sexual intercourse. For Nissim Ezekiel's woman is always a temptress, the seductress. In the Vth section of *Nudes 1978* (from *Latter Day Psalms*), it is Daisy who says:

> It's inconceivable
> That he's not sleeping with someone these days, so why shouldn't I, too, have my fling? Yes, I suppose I do still love him, for all the things I've always loved in him. He has a sense of humour, almost yours. I'm sure, he would be quite amused to know that I am here with a stranger free, frank and in his words, **nakedly beautiful**.

(Ibid, 247)

Physical: Woman: 56

The poet comes out with Daisy as a typical woman image. Nissim's Daisy is traditional Indian woman in respect of her giving 'tooth for a tooth' or an 'eye for eye'. Ezekiel is graphical enough in painting the typical woman response to sex.

> And, I amazed, 'you mean you miss Orgasm?' Then she, once again 'with you, it does not matter.'

(Ibid, 248)
Physical: Woman: 57

In the poem ‘Virginal’ Ezekiel creates an image of a virgin who has denied herself the play of her natural instincts. The poet feels pity for the ageing virgin who is ‘remote from the prospect of the wedding kiss’, and ‘just tunes a radio or reads a book to put up with her lifeless existence:

You were not made to live like this, although
Your face suggests that you are reconciled
Its gentle sadness as it slowly, grew
And crushed your liveliness, oppressed me too,
The universe is much too small to hold
Your longing for a lover and a child.

(Ibid, 139)

Physical: Woman: 58

Quite strangely Ezekiel seems admiring the woman for her wisdom and honour. So the association of the woman’s wisdom and honour does signal a fresh perspective on woman, very much on the positive side. In some of his poems Ezekiel seems to be influenced by Gandhi’s exhortation on the theme of Indian Writers:

“As me once suggested that before they start writing they should think of woman as their mother and it helps one to write the chastest literature of the world.”

(King, 1987: 87)

‘A Woman Admired’ portrays the mother image, where she is a protector, particularly as one who keeps a ‘watchful’ eye on her daughter.
Ezekiel possesses a thinking mind and his poetry embraces a wide range of themes. The critical tool in which he excels and exceeds his contemporaries is irony. He views the ‘Ordinariness of most events’ with a sense of detachment. The superstition and folk belief that exist in the society – particularly with the common illiterate mass, is a favourite subject for Ezekiel. He handles such themes with superb irony. The image of cow in the poem ‘Cow’ is evocative of the religious fervour of the rural people; particularly women:

She knows that cows are holy
Worshipped by the parents
Of the children in her school
Even gods ought not to clutter up
The pavements – that’s her view,
She is not against beliefs: believe
What you like, she says
But get out of my way.

(Ezekiel, 1989: 119)

Thus, we find Ezekiel’s poetry loaded with the physical images. These images open the vista of the poet’s surrounding and evoke several strands of meaning through it.