CHAPTER - II

THE POETRY OF NISSIM EZEKIEL : A VOICE OF COMMITMENT

I

INTRODUCTORY

It is commonly known that of all the literary forms, especially the prose forms are more naturally and readily responsive to life and routine realities than poetry and poetical forms. These prose forms namely the novel, drama (excluding poetic drama), the short story and the essay are more accommodating and more flexible in comparison with poetry.

Poetry as the most ancient and the most imaginative form of literary expression is an orthodox and conventional art like dance and music. Things that get naturalised and absorbed easily in prose take relatively a longer time to
'melt' and be digested in poetry. Poetry, formally, presupposes prosody, a type of stanza pattern, a regular rhythm; a beat.

Because of this implicit discipline, the routine realities are sparsely reflected in poetry except, of course, in modern poetry since the days of Eliot.

It is for this reason that alienation as a hard social phenomenon and commitment as an individual mode of creativity came to be manifest in European literatures more readily and tangibly first in prose-forms but later, after a long while, sparsely in poetry. Most of the writers whose works strongly responded to alienation are either novelists or playwrights or both in one. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Sartre, Camus, George Orwell, Angus Wilson, John Osborne, Arnold Wesker are mainly novelists and playwrights. Perhaps Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* is the lone example of poetry wherein one could experience repercussions of alienation more strongly.

Likewise even in Indo-English literature the effects of alienation came to be felt first in the prose works of Nirad Chowdhary, V.S. Naipaul and later quite sparsely in the works of Dom Moraes and the Parsi poets.

Of the Indo-English poets, the present trio — the three poets we have chosen for our study — are the ones, we
believe, who have come to encounter this genuine contemporary issue with greater poetic wisdom and competence.

The merit of this trio is their natural response to these contemporary phenomena. These hard issues of life 'melt' into their poetic psyche and find such an expression in a modern idiom which affords us a rare poetic experience.

Of these three poets, Ezekiel's poetry emerges as a triumphant voice of commitment. Bearing alienation by birth, Ezekiel divests himself of it by modestly reconciling his being with the place and the people amidst whom he was born. "My self must I remake," said Yeats. Ezekiel, like Yeats, committed himself to the task of making himself of what he is through his people and the place.

Parthasarathy's alienation arises over a realization that he spent all his time whoring after English gods. The alienated poet turns back to seek his roots in his Tamil heritage. Here too his search does not end. The poet's linguistic predicament is made to suggest symbolically the profounder dimensions of his main search for self identify.

In Ramanujan, alienation takes a subtler form. There arises in him a personality-split and alienation brings forth nostalgic memories touched with irony and sometimes with poignant satire. His varied interests expressed with an extra ordinary sense of linguistic precision maintain the
neatness and sparkle of his poetry making it more objective and impersonal. Of the three poets, he is the most non-commital. He is less 'involved' and more 'interested' in life; he is nearer, in this respect, to Pound than to Eliot.

The most notable feature of commitment as it is manifest through these poets is that their commitment cannot be associated with any kind of left-wing ideologies or policies. These poets cannot be described as 'committed ones' in the sense meant by Sartre. They cannot be called writers possessing predominantly 'a social consciousness' like Bernard Shaw, Angus Wilson, Arnold Wesker. These poets, what we believe and maintain about them is that, have that type of commitment pure and simple, and aesthetically fruitful in the sense that Mander describes it to which we fully subscribe all along the present study.

With these guidelines before us, we propose to deal with these poets in the order already mentioned in the contents of the present study.
Among the "New" poets of Indo-English poetry, Ezekiel occupies an important place, almost the central position. Perhaps he is the first poet who felt the winds of change and responded to the changing sensibility in the late forties of this century. To harness the Yeats–Eliot–Auden temper and attitudes to Indian ways was a great feat. Ezekiel's growing mind achieved it by imbibing the new sensibility and inducting a new idiom into poetry. He sincerely felt that it was time to change and changed accordingly. It was during January–March 1959, when Professor K.R.S. Iyengar delivered a series of lectures at Leeds University on Indian literature to students of the English Department, he admired Ezekiel's poetry for being 'lucid... splendidly evocative and satisfyingly sensuous.' (1) He discovered in Ezekiel 'an artist who is willing to take pains, to cultivate reticence, to pursue the profession of poetry with a sense of commitment.' (2) The criticism was not only right evaluation but attribute to the genius of the poet.

Ezekiel is one Indian poet who pursued the profession of poetry with a sense of dedication and commitment. He

(2) Ibid., p. 657.
declared his intention to be "defined in poetry" as "he is in reality." Like W.B. Yeats, Ezekiel became the 'hero' of his poetry. In Ezekiel, we find the man and the poet are one. Both of them mutually act and react, the artist poet and the man of concerns coalesce and we have Ezekiel's poetry reflecting his experiences.

Among his fellow poets, Ezekiel is an artist with an introspective mind and reticent expression. "The best poets wait for words,"(3) he said. For him, "The slow movement seems, somehow, to say much more."(3a) It is in this context his poetry, which is the direct reflection of his life, needs to be evaluated. Its noteworthy feature is that despite its being amply fed directly by the life that the poet lives, it remains trim, precise and shapely declaring the triumph of the poet's skill and craftsmanship.

Born of Jewish parents, Ezekiel admitted that he was an "outsider" to this land. But paradoxically enough he was turned to be a genuine "insider" fully conscious of his responsibilities as an artist and citizen of this land.(4) He judged himself impartially and stated, "my background makes me natural outsider, circumstances and decision relate me to India."(4a) It is most interesting to observe how Ezekiel

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(3) From his poem "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher." Ten Twentieth Century Indian poets. p. 33.

(3a) Ibid., p. 33.


encounters the problem of alienation. The moment that he declares that he is not a poet alienated, he has implicitly accepted with utmost modesty the mantle of commitment. Perhaps no Indo-English poet has been able to judge the most obsessive question of alienation so right-mindedly as Ezekiel has done. In a sense, his poetry is a most resonant affirmation against alienation. This affirmation itself which constitutes his commitment originates "in delight." And that is the chief fructifying force of his creativity.

Ezekiel has made his stand clear, time and again, on the question of alienation. In his articles on V.S. Naipal and Nirad Chaudhary he has expressed his dislike for the views held by these alienated Indians. In an article in the Free Press Bulletin he stated, "All growth independent of one's environment has an alienating effect." Once in an interview with John Beston he said, "Every Writer has to write about his original setting rather than his new setting." These statements clearly indicate how much the poet desires to be rooted in the environment in which he was born. In 'Enterprise' he admits, "Home is where we have to gather grace."

Besides, the present study cannot afford to miss a few of Ezekiel's crucial pronouncements on alienation which will

help us with a correct perspective in judging the nature of his commitment. He says on the question of alienation, "one cannot pretend or play the game of alienation." (8) According to Ezekiel if one is genuinely alienated one feels hostile towards others, and they in return towards the one. "You hate their guts and they hate yours; this can produce great literature. This genuine alienation is absent." (9) On alienation in Indian poetry he made his stand clear. "For an Indo-English writer," he said, "to be alienated he must have a contempt for his audience and a similar failure on his part, a pointlessness in trying to communicate. I know no such Indian writer isolated like a Camus or Dostovesky character." (10)

It is very important to note that Ezekiel admits that alienation certainly produces great literature, but genuine alienation, as he thinks of it, is absent in the Indian context. Very few of us have the guts to be a misanthrope like Swift. Alienation is a costly proposition; it makes death more enchanting and leads to a philosophy of the absurd or a philosophy of suicide. That is the reason why very few Indians could become 'writers of alienation.' This is also the reason why alienation was felt intensely in the European ethos, not so in the Indian context.

(8) Quoted by M.K. Naik in his article 'Nissim Ezekiel and Alienation' pub. in Journal of Indian Writing in English (Gulburga, July 1986) ed. G.S. Balram Gupta, p. 49.

(9) Quoted by M.K. Naik, in his article 'Nissim Ezekiel and Alienation' pub. in Journal of Indian Writing in English (Gulburga, 1986) Ed. G.S. Balram Gupta, p. 49.

(10) Ibid., p. 49.
His poetry reflects many of the biographical details of his varied occupation.

"Practising a singing and a talking voice
Is all the creed a man of God requires."
- "A Time to Change" (11)

Life is open to experiences and man learns by accepting it in its fullness. The very source of such life is love. Life can be more fresh and meaningful with love.

Yet as we progress
from things we think are known
To what we are so sure can easily be mastered
Sly rust encrusts the aspiration,
Youth runs out of song
Until one learns to start again
Love of life can always be renewed. (12)
- 'A Time to Change'

According to him travelling extensively even in an alien land provides him with so much information that it enriches his life. (There are people and there are dreams.) Associating oneself with people and sharing their dreams, joys and sorrows makes life meaningful,

'He has to silence no one but himself
And walk occasionally on alien land
To know the various lives and dreams of man.
And show his deep affection for the world
With words emerging from a contrite heart.' (13)
- 'A Time to Change'

(12) Ibid., p. 12.
(13) Ibid., p. 12.
Ezekiel, essentially a lover of life and the people, can hardly persuade himself to have any contempt for his men and audience. He cannot isolate himself like a Camus or Dostoevsky character. Instead, it is his great delight and joy to be one with the people and the place. What he desires is "involvement" with the affairs and business of the people. It is this intense desire to be "involved in" is what constitutes the commitment of Ezekiel. In its larger connotation, it is the sense of belongingness that suffuses the springs of Ezekiel's creativity and sustains him through his poetry giving it warmth, cordiality, soft banter and above all the rare poetic delight.

The title of his very first collection of poems "A Time to Change" sounds like a phrase of a serious dramatic soliloquy. The poem also intends to announce that the Indo-English poetry, which hitherto was almost 'romantic', was taking a new turn in its form, content and expression. A time has come to change; the style has been set and Ezekiel seems to be a link between two kinds of Indo-English poetry, rather one would say that he is "the last of the romantics" and the "first modernist." It is interesting to note that most of the titles of his poems are effulgent points of self illumination. His poetry in this respect is a kind of self probe, an attempt at self exploration as man and poet. It is this fact that seems to unfold the theme of commitment in Ezekiel.
'A Time to Change' states that poetry like life is pure discovery. It is a precise communication of thought. One has to struggle to discover life and more so one struggles to discover thoughts for poetry. It is an experience, serene and enlightened. One has to create something out of nothing. It is a discovery, which brings enchanting. But the way towards illumination is hard and difficult. It is like Socrates asking the people to discover truth. But here the truth the poet aims at, is about oneself, it is in fact discovery of the self:

'Subsidised by dreams alone
The stubborn workman breaks the stone,
Soil, allows the seed die in it, waits
Patiently for grapes or figs and even
Finds, on a lucky day, a metaphor
Leaping from the sod
If this is not a miracle
Then I am God';

'A Time to Change' (14)

Writing poetry according to Ezekiel is creating a new world. The poet brings out his innermost secrets, hidden thoughts to give a form and a shape, through language of his own. In the very process the poet experiences the thrill and ecstasy.

(14) Ibid., p. 12.
Ezekiel in an attempt to probe his self does not hesitate to indicate his personal flaws and defects. This frankness adds a unique facet to his poetic expression. This also shows the poet's affinity to life. The essence of life is what one makes of it at the end. He has set out to discover what life is; to know about himself; and to understand men and women that live around him.

In short, the whole poem 'A Time to Change' is a long quest in five sections which reveal the poet's frustrations, his quest for identity and his conviction that this identity is to be sought in the life one lives and not outside of it. The understanding of life could be achieved only through human relations. It is this process of understanding that brings out his concerns, his social ideals, his genuine sympathy for suffering humanity. That is the reason why the poet constantly moves between two poles: the personal identity on the one hand and its relation to the people around him.

In all his later poems Ezekiel moves between these two extremes. Michael Garman rightly says that in this poem, "The Poet's religion sympathetically assumes a double aspect - the introspective contemplative and the outward active." (15)

During the search the poet never fails to become self critical. The world he lives in has become corrupt. He is one among those corrupt men. In getting into this vicious circle he is reduced to a kind of subhuman state. A feeling that he is lacking in basic human virtues makes him sad and dissatisfied.

Here everyone apparently clicks with everyone else for one's own personal gains, may it be brothers, comrades or relatives. All of them wear the mask of good relations including our disloyal leaders. Relationship in the world of corruption has lost its meaning and purpose. Even at the individual level every one is as the poet says, —"the sterile whore of private politics."

This awareness on the part of the poet that he is tainted by the corrupt world is a mark of his honesty and integrity.

'.... only being what I am
Hurts, and hurts the world although it does not know
Between the world and me there is a frightful
Equipose, as infected I corrupt the world.
(The Double Horror')(17)

Ezekiel's commitment to his people and place makes him take a serious view of poetry which has turned out to his profession. He feels that poetry is his true vocation. He


likes to state that the poet and his poetry are inseparable. Poetry in this sense becomes autobiographical:

\[
\text{If it were so as I say it is}
\]
\[
\text{In poetry, precisely so,}
\]
\[
\text{A face, a savage, singular}
\]
\[
\text{But well defined identity,}
\]
\[
\text{Homage would be done to it}
\]
\[
\text{By such a sleep, such a lucid flow}
\]
\[
\text{Of time, that I would be}
\]
\[
\text{In poetry defined}
\]
\[
\text{As in reality I should be}
\]

(-- Poetry) (18)

Poetry for Ezekiel is an attempt at portraying his own quest for identity. It is almost synonymous with life and the poem is a product of an individual's experience about life.

"A poem in an episode, completed
In an hour or two, but poetry
Is something more. It is the why
The how, the what, the flow
From which a poem comes"

(-- Poetry) (19)

Life is a constant flow. For an individual it is a matter of experiences. It is in this process of finding meaning, and experiencing it, one discovers poetry. The process goes on producing poems, which sparkle like crystals of poet's experiences.

(18) Ibid., p. 17.
(19) Ibid., p. 17.
In the 'Case Study,' the poet tells about his primary education and later about his higher education. During this phase of life he gets involved in a love affair. It is this experience which he has gained during this period that enriches his poetry and Ezekiel becomes more a poet of experience than a poet of mere observation.

Here, Ezekiel becomes self-critical. Like any Indian he has also made the whole life more or less a mess. Aimlessly he begot the children and once they were born, he started loving them more as duty rather naturally. In this 'art of loving' he became either too strict or a little too liberal and so did the wife and the changing servants. All this went against the proper upbringing of children. In some respects they grew up spoilt ones. Like most middle class Indians he was a failure in the domestic game. He kept on changing jobs. Perhaps he did so as he found the other job always more attractive. Because he was to realize his dreams did he do like this? No body knew; even those as well who criticised the poet's job hunting.

"He worked at various jobs and then he stopped
For reasons never clear nor quite approved
By those who know; some almost said he shopped
Around for dreams and projects later dropped
(Though this was quite untrue); he never moved
Unless he found something he might have loved."

- 'Case Study' - (20)

(20) Ibid., p. 68.
This pattern of life was the poet's favourite though the people around him did not like it much.

Ezekiel's immense interest in the people around him manifests in various poems. The poem 'In India' presents a picture of slum life. India is a country with multiple contrasts. Stark poverty, indisciplined and yet god-fearing youths, apparently decent but vulgar men—all these are portrayed in the four sections of the poem. Sections three and four specially focus on man-woman relationship.

The first section focuses on urban life in India. It is very much disturbing and alarming with its expanding slums and over crowded slum dwellers, beggars, pavement sleepers and added to all these are the hawkers who make brisk business in such places with cheap, saleable commodities. The moment the sun rises one finds them left to their cruel fate. In these places what does one find? Oh! those soulless people living in slums along with their gods without souls, the portraits of whom are hung or pasted on the walls of these hutments. Here are mothers with bent frames on account of their continual maternity hazards; there are frightened virgins and wasted children; and pets who wander around these slums. "The time and place, both suffer in these places." Ezekiel's poem paints this stark situation in such lurid colours that one hardly fails to notice his sincerity behind it.
Now Ezekiel describes his own days of youth amidst people of different castes and communities. There were around him Goan Roman Catholic Youths, fair Anglo-Indians, stout Muslim boys. These youths indulged in all sorts of mischief. They damaged school furniture; they boasted of their love affairs; they confessed their games with high heeled girls. They stealthily enjoyed whisky. They had all vices in them but inspite of all this they were very much God fearing. They never missed their prayers, their dedication to religion was apparently praise worthy. Ezekiel's reference for religion without becoming blind to the vices of the religious people adds much to his serene sense of life.

In the next section Ezekiel amusingly views Indian women and their orthodox wags. They appear to be prudish in contrast with their western counterparts.

"The Wives of India sit apart
They do not drink,
They do not talk,
Of course, they do not kiss.
The men are quite at home
among the foreign styles
(What fun the flirting is!)

('In India')

This shows the women in India are less free and less advanced than their counterparts in western countries. Yorburg

(21) Ibid., p. 73.
in her 'study of sex roles in the East' points out that in India "Men and Women (other than brothers and sisters) who were of the same generation did not sit together and talk." She also remarks that "this kind of segregation was observed in social and religious activities too." But this image is changed later in the poem and there one observes a radical change in the picture. Mark what the poet describes in the second meeting. The glumness that one witnessed earlier in these women is now absent.

'At the second meeting
In the large apartment
After the cold beer and the music Oh!!
She sat in disarray
The struggle had been hard
And not altogether successful
Certainly the blouse
Would not be used again.
But with true British courtesy
He lent her a safety pin
Before she took the elevator down.'

('In India')

Ezekiel's love for elders and the hoary tradition has been echoed in the poem 'The Great.' He loves those elders, the ancestors of the olden days, so much that he feels disappointed as this dedication and the same could not be recognized now by those elders.

'The great can never know how much I love them.
Every day they live and die in me but still
They cannot make me great. I am alone.'

('The Great') (24)

Most of us know our ancestors through past history. Though the life of these men was exemplary, it was not without its drawbacks and inherent weaknesses. They were egoistic, sensual, though they were self sacrificing and self controlled. They were loveable as well as damnable, selfish as well as sympathetic, though happily married they were sex-frustrated. Besides this, favouritism, cowardice, vigour, and daring was all found in them. And yet:

"In their shameful failures dignified"

('The Great') (25)

The poem reveals the poet's reverence for the past. But none the less he is frank and outright in featuring the negative points and weakness of these men.

However, the poet admits that the way they lived through, high or low has set a life pattern for the next generation.

Ezekiel is a poet whose love and passion embrace each and everything in life. For that matter the entire

(24) Ibid., p. 19.
universe is his limit. Love for the earth confers on him the most fantastic dreams. This kind of love is the most sustaining one in his life. It is the only thing that doesn't cheat him in life. If one knows how to love one can conquer love holding it under one's command.

'And with the news we bring of other worlds
Enlarge the world of love with love of worlds'
(- And God Revealed) (26)

With this type of affection the poet is enabled to see, know, bear, touch and praise 'the strange and mysterious earth' which appears different at different times. But one striking characteristic of the earth is that it is always everfresh. Therefore, the poet is of the opinion that our love should always remain as fresh as the earth.

"Yet we, to keep our love as fresh as earth
Must charge our earthly with love of earth."
(- And God Revealed) (27)

As human beings we are not made for love alone. There are thousands of cells, small miracles that control and regulate the beautiful human body. Along with love, human beings are blessed with various faculties and passions.

(26) Ibid., p. 20.
(27) Ibid., p. 20.
The poem "To a Certain Lady" projects apparently the varied images of womanhood. The images are drawn from various fields, all of them reinforcing the central image of the lady. The lady is none other than poet's own life partner. There is an intimate study of woman who plays different roles in man's life. The poet though hesitant at the beginning becomes quite frank and beckons his life partner to drop away all fears. He says:

'The best defence in love is just defencelessness'

('To a Certain Lady') (28)

The poet further evokes the most sensuous moods through the following lines:

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 wed,
Smell of myrrh
Spikenard
Saffron, calcamus, cinnamon, frankincense
Aloes, Breasts like roes, And such eyes!

'To a Certain Lady' (29)

(28) Ibid., p. 21.
(29) Ibid., p. 21.
These lines describe the pleasures of love in youth and marriage. These are all different states of life one has to go through and the time keeps on moving. In life the young and adolescent love is always insatiable and the time is always moving.

The different experiences we gather through life make us develop our attachment with it:

'Testing our hold on life
And obstinate attachment to the world.'
'To a Certain Lady' (30)

Human life can be made lively by establishing relationships, and connections with the unknown persons and strangers. The chance of meeting strangers and developing friendships with them—all this is mysterious and enchanting. These acts—this continuous process renders life meaningful. There blossoms amidst these actions, a sense of belongingness by which even ordinary thing of life like pictures, curtains, glass, carpets are brought nearer to our hearts.

Considering woman as symbol of joy, heartiness cordiality, and above all love itself, the poet invokes her spirit to teach him elegant things of life.

(30) Ibid., p. 22.
Teach us, love, above all things, fidelity to music, 
Sharpen our responses to the colours of creation, 
Lead us undeceptively to what comes after passion, 
And let us die, love, as though we chose to, 
for reason.

('To a Certain Lady') (31)

Affinity with life for Ezekiel is something important. It inspires dedication, stability, affection, love, and above all integration. This shows how Ezekiel is deeply committed to life. Life is enticing as well as repelling. It is fairly clear that the poet accepts both the phases of life. Ezekiel loves life in all its totality. He is not an escapist.

One who loves life so intimately naturally takes any subject in his stride. In "Marriage Poem," the poet is trying to understand the meaning of marriage. After the orgasm and the ecstasy there is a moment of sedate and serene state which, according to the poet, keeps the nuptial pattern firm and stable.

'Between the acts of wedded love
A quieter passion flows
Which keeps the nuptial pattern firm
As passion comes and goes,
And in the soil of wedded love
Rears a white rose'

('Marriage Poem') (32)

(31) Ibid., p. 23.
The realization that this hidden passion quietly flows act after act between man and woman gives a meaning to their married life. By this, an emotional binding between man and woman is being strengthened. In this 'wet soil' of wedded love, the poet says, a white rose blossoms, which is the ultimate secret of life that fulfills and confirms the process of belongingness for each other in life. It is here love bridges the hearts of the couple quite meaningfully.

It is here life gets suffused with greater sense of security and harmony. Hence the poet beckons this earthly love to become more and more active. On the surface of it, it may look quieter but this quieter passion keeps the life all the more lively and more meaningful.

If the 'Marriage Poem' is a post-orgasm poem, a still more passionate act of love is described in 'Two Nights of Love.' The poem is Lawrencean in its approach to the subject. The poet's frankness and his passion for being true to the subject-matter is a testimony to the fact that he is a greater lover of life in its fascinating aspects. As this passionate love is a part of one's life, there is nothing to conceal about it in any way. The poet recalls his experience of night long love and tries to relive that experience:
'After a night of love I dreamt of love 
Unconfined to threshing thighs and breasts 
That bear the weight of me with spirit 
Light and free I wanted to be bound 
Within a freedom fresh as God's name 
Through all the centuries of Godlessness.'

- 'Two Nights of Love' (33)

The poet's repeated longing makes him feel fresh, as fresh as God's name. During the act of love, one reaches such a stature that it can be compared only with God's. Thus the poet intends to convey here the nature of the blissful act. Through this act Ezekiel says, he wants to enter into centuries of godlessness. That means the supreme bliss makes him forget the existence of god.

Nowhere, and in no other action such a freedom is enjoyed by man in his life. The male's longing for the female body is as old as the creation itself. Here the poet uses the word 'earth' to indicate a significant meaning. This is the earth, he seems to say, is nature's rare gift to man. It is the very source of life to mankind. The poet, a lover of life as he is, is simply amazed at its sheer freshness. It is an ever fresh experience that man continues to cherish and preserve forever:

In his another poem 'A Poem of Blindness' Ezekiel describes the emerging ecstasy that man experiences when love becomes a passion.

(33) Ibid, p. 31.
The Love Sonnet reflects the poet's idea of harmony in man-woman relationship. Their mutual love is formed so naturally that it is almost like the dew formed on summer nights. Their mutual feeling of harmony is well expressed by the poet in the line - 'We look in consort at the distant sea.' The role that woman assumes in man's life that of a wife or beloved, is quite pleasant and blissful. Once the bondage of love is established the couple feels contented. The lovers experience a sense of mutual belongingness. This ethereal feeling, the poet says, makes the "lovers float down the hill as on a cloud, proud as lovers are."

The passion of love, according to the poet, is so great and pristine that it never gets polluted even in the midst of urban chaos and disorderliness. Even death has happiness to offer in this state. It almost equates itself to the joy of life:

"We look inquiringly at road and sky,
A certain happiness would be - to die."

- 'Love Sonnet' (34)

'A certain happiness would be to die.' Karnani (35) rightly interprets that 'Ezekiel's use of the infinitive "to die" should be taken to mean "make love" which it did in

(34) Ibid., p. 64.
the seventeenth century, particularly in the love poem of John Donne. However, Emmanuel Narendra Lall disagrees with this reading of the above phrase and suggests that 'the couple wants to prolong their state of happiness, as death will mean the cessation of all activity.' Also, this confession is the result of a fear that soon discord will enter their relationship; therefore; this life-negating thought to preserve an experience that is life-affirming."(36)

Ezekiel's depicting of man-woman relationship adds most relevant dimensions, though slightly in a remoter sense, to his interest and involvement in life itself. He has made a sincere and frank attempt to understand the essence of this relationship. However, this has been one of the favourite subjects throughout his poetry. The poet, sees the woman as Nature's phenomenon fulfilling biological and social roles. The multiple roles in which women are engaged in Ezekiel's poetry evince the poet's sympathy and respect for them.

His poem - "A woman observed' gives us a further insight into the man-woman relationship.

'Background Casually' is one of the autobiographical poems of Ezekiel, which shows him to be very much Indian.

He affirms that he belongs to India and his roots strike deep in the soil of this country.

The poet is frank enough to admit that he has not inherited the great Indian tradition of the Vedas and the Upanishads. But he has availed himself of the composite culture of India to which he belongs. Ezekiel's fellow feeling is of great importance not merely in the Indian context but it affords a model of ethnic commitment through his poetry. There is a note of continual self-exploration in the poem. The background of his life has been faithfully elaborated here. Rootedness despite change is a permanent feature of his poetry.

The poet, at the outset, gives us a picture of his 'frightened' childhood. Being over sensitive he felt wretched among his Muslim and Parsi friends.

Since he belonged to a minority community he had to face many hardships at school. He was admitted to a Roman Catholic School where he was ill treated by Christian boys. He was 'a mugging Jew' among those wolves. They were christians but possessed no christian charity. Ironically enough it was this hated Jew who won, "the scripture prize."

Even the Hindu boys were equally unkind. Though undernourished, they were strong. They terrorized the poor
Jew. He too looked down upon them, for 'their prepositions were always wrong': They were dullards, inactive and lazy.

Continuing the account of his background the poet says that his people wanted him to become a priest, but a bit of self analysis showed him that he was not worthy of the noble profession. He attended the prayers and preaching sessions of Hindu Yogis and Jewish priests, but nothing could make him better and nobler. He admits that he had no religious zeal.

After his schooling and graduation in India he went to England for specialization in higher studies at the age of twenty two with the help of a family friend who paid the fare. He tells us that philosophy, poverty and poetry were his "three companions" who shared his "basement room" in London. It was from here that he observed the outside world with zeal and interest.

It is in such a distant and far off country like England that Ezekiel's sense of commitment to India and Indian life became more sharpened; his feelings of belongingness to this country grew intense. He, no doubt, has his dislikes and hatred for certain things that are Indian. But his dislike and hatred are marks of poet's righteous indignation. India with all her shortcomings attracts him most as no other country did.
After having lived a dull and prosaic life in London for two years, he decides to return to India. As he had no money to pay his journey's fare he worked as labourer, did menial jobs of scrubbing the floors etc. And he felt quite happy in this work. Thus he returned to India a total failure. He studied a bit of philosophy which was of no practical use in life. It merely added to his confusion and perplexity. He was faced with the problem of adjustment. He did not know what to do and how to feel at home. Nevertheless he was not embittered with the state of affairs as he found it in India. Paradoxically enough, unlike other westernised Indians like Nirad Chaudhary, Dom Mares and V.S. Naipaul, he cherished high pride and love for India and hugged its poverty, squalor, sterility along with its past glory and splendour.

With all such odds and unfavourable circumstances he remained attached to this country and to the city of Bombay where he has ultimately settled down.

In the poem he tells about his ancestors of humble means and status. They were of Saturday Oil-pressing Jewish race, popularly known as 'Shanwar Telis':

'My ancestors, among the castes, 
were aliens crushing seed for bread.'

- Background Casually (37)

He fondly recalls here the memory of his family bullock which went round and round moving the crushing machine of oil seeds.

In contrast to these childhood dreams, Ezekiel has been left empty and alone with words only and his poetic craft, later in his adult days:

The later dreams were all of words I did not know that words betray But let the poems come, and lost That grip on things the worldly prize. I would not suffer that again. 'Background Casually' (38)

Now he has accepted this craft in a spirit of dedication and he tries to cultivate greater clarity of vision, better understanding of life and its problems. Thereby he will continue to serve the cause of poetry as well. Others may consider him a fool, but wisdom consists in making the best of 'one's opportunities.' So he makes the best use of both of the inner and the outer storms of life in his poetry.

Just as he is committed to the profession of poetry, so is he committed to the country of his choice and to the city of Bombay which he has made his abode. The climate is too hot for him; it sears his eyes. His

(38) Ibid., p. 86.
friends abroad who visit him or those who write to him from abroad are surprised to see that he has managed to survive in the heat and squalor of India. But Ezekiel thinks that these friends perhaps exaggerate things. He is very proud of Indian circumstances. He has developed a sense of belongingness to this country.

"I have made my commitments now
This is one: to stay where I am,
As others choose to given themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am."
- Background Casually. (39)

He has no craze for visiting foreign countries. He has gracefully accepted the place as his own. His poetry is an honest portrait of the life of this country. Though it is a 'backward place' the poet is proud to be the citizen of this backward country.

The poet's earnest concern for the people around him culminates in a poem like 'on Bellasis Road' where he sympathises with a road side prostitute. In this poem his anxiety for the commoner in the street is being expressed. Essentially a lover of humanity, Ezekiel's attention is drawn to a woman in the street who earns her bread by selling her body and thus ekes out her existence on the streets of Bombay.

(39) Ibid., p. 86.
Prostitution is a profession which is generally looked down upon by people. But the poet views it with greater concern and sympathy.

The prostitute, the poet says, is a public property, as common 'as a post box on the pavement'. Her red saree is a symbol of her profession; she is a part of the red light area. She appears more colourful than sober. Her only aim is to attract passers by. They just fall prey to her and customers find her as bare as her feet:

"A moment later
I sense her as a woman
bare as her feet
beneath the Shimmer."

'Oon Bellasis Road' (40)

Describing her modesty the poet says that she never looked at him at all but patiently waited for the type of customers, who were low and lewd like her:

"She doesn't glance at me,
Waiting for her
Hawker or mill worker,
Coolie or Bird-man
fortune teller,
pavement man of medicine
or street barber on the move."

-'On Bellasis Road,' (41)

(40) Ibid., p. 95.
(41) Ibid., p. 95.
She is now a part of Bombay's foot path business. She dwelt on the pavements of the city earning her livelihood like other cheap roadside traders. The prostitute that the poet describes here is a commodity for sale rather than a living being. Thus the poet elicits our sympathy for her.

Ezekiel while observing the life of this prostitute doesn't think her act as either moral or immoral. She has adopted this kind of life out of helplessness. It is important to live life, and everyone wants to maintain oneself as joyously as oneself could. The poet has greater sympathy for this pavement dweller. When he cannot do anything but be a silent spectator, he has no right to criticise her morality:

I see her image now
as through a telescope
Without a single
desperate moral
to keep it in focus,
remote and close up.
Of what use then to see and think?
I cannot even say I care or do not care;
Perhaps it is a kind of despair."

- 'On Bellasis Road' (42)

(42) Ibid., p. 95.
Ezekiel by his sympathy for the socially down trodden has shown his sense of belongingness to the society. This concern and sympathy for the people of the street is another aspect of Ezekiel's commitment to the society and the people therein.

'Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S.' is a poem which captures most amusingly the very Indianness of Indian social life. Here Indians' craze for things exotic titillates the poet's fancy. The poet makes fun of a typical Indian's craze for English language. The poet here has parodied the English of semi-urbanized people. It throws light upon our fashionable young ladies and their mental vacuity. It is, therefore, a 'delicious bit of social satire' on the fond affectations and pretensions of middleclass Indians and their wrong use of English for day-to-day matters.

This poem is in the form of a farewell speech. A party has been arranged, a number of friends have been invited to say goodbye to Miss Pushpa who is 'departing for foreign' in 'two or three days' to improve her prospects.

The speaker praises Miss Pushpa for her grace and amiability. He says that she is sweet 'externally and internally.' She always smiles even when there is no reason to do so. She smiles simply because she feels like
smiling. The speaker continues his English speech with Indian syntax and Indian accent as the nuances go on exploding humour at every turn and curve of the phrase he uses.

It is to be noted here that the speech is rambling, and even the logical connectives between ideas are missing which is typical of Indian English.

The poet has grasped the very tone and tenor of Indian English here. This can be clearly made out by the way he has parodied the pidgin English. His deliberate use of expressions like 'we are meeting', 'you are all knowing', 'I am not remembering' and so on expose Indian's obsession show how people make with imperfect present tense in grammar.

Ezekiel has been commonly described as poet of the city. It is the urban India that has largely influenced his poetry. Especially the life of the city of Bombay has provided much food for his poetry. The poet has a close encounter with various facets of city life. The overall setup of the city is disgusting, yet he has to make his living here as he has struck a 'frightful equipoise' between himself and the life here. He is confronted with dullness and drabness everywhere.
The growth of cities and urban attitudes in the post-independence days brought in elements of alienation in Indian social life. Ezekiel's poetry is extremely sensitive to this aspect. The city of Bombay dominates his poetry. 'A Morning Walk' is an obvious testimony to this. It is through the particular example of Bombay, the poet has the advantage of offering his comments on the whole of modern civilization which is basically city oriented. In the poem the poet looks at the city and finds it 'cold' and 'dim'. Here 'human hands sell cheap.' The old idyllic scene and the simple peasantry have disappeared. The poet is confronted with drab, sterile landscape. He addresses the city in anger.

'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.'

- 'A Morning Walk' - (43)

This picture is reminiscent of the city in 'the Waste Land.' The modern city has dehumanising effect. The poet wades through this "hell" in order to get somewhere at a higher place. He describes the lanes he walks across are "purgatorial lanes."

(43) Ibid., p. 63.
The life in city is boring. A little walk farther from the chaos of the city brings fresh breeze; there are trees here which stand lonely. Nature has taken a back seat in these urban surroundings.

In cities most of the people are enamoured of the surrounding glamour and gloss. Flattered by the colourful life men get lost in the speedy flow of city life. It is through painful fragments of experience one gets insight into life. One mentally gets oppressed. Every morning brings in a freshness to each moment of life that one lives here.

The poet says that though there is coolness on the hilltops where gardens are maintained, there is a lot of artificiality here in the name of beauty. The garden hedges are cut to look like birds or some mythic beasts still in their sleep. Everyone here has his past which now looks like a muddy pool. There is much artificiality and pretension in urban areas that one just accepts life here without questioning its genuineness. After all what does this city convey?

"The city wakes, where fame is cheap,  
And he belongs, an active fool."

- 'A Morning Walk' (44)

(44) Ibid., p. 63.
In the poem 'A Small Summit' Ezekiel states about his own self-imposed alienation. He is trying to reach in his own humble way, the summit where he wants to be alone and away from others. He is in pursuit of something important. He has some fire within himself to create something better, and of higher value. For this he needs some kind of aloofness even from his friends and relations.

The poet states that though he loves to belong to his people and the place, he craves to reach and achieve something beyond that. He refuses to be categorised as commonplace:

"Do I belong, I wonder
to the common plain? A better thought
I know that I would rather
suffer somewhere else
than be at home
among the accepted styles."

- 'A Small Summit' (45)

One can mark in the poem that the poet has the distinction of making his commitment more merited and deserving. The people dwelling in this world are mechanical and aimless in their routing life. They achieve nothing; they just carry on. The poet doesn't want to reconcile with such people as he wants to grow and find new avenues, new heights and conquer new landscapes but all in a modest way. That is why he calls the poem a small summit.

(45) Ibid., p. 93.
The poem suggests modestly but in an effective way that the poet though he belonged to the common run of people, his poetry achieves something beyond the commonplace. Therefore he asks:

"Why should I be reconciled to middle aged spread and rigmarole?"

- 'A Small Summit' (46)

Thus Ezekiel's commitment has something meritorious about it. It transcends the ordinary showiness to reach an authentic heartiness and cordiality.

From the beginning of his career we notice Ezekiel's growing concern about the way art should relate itself to life's problems. He has always been a great art lover but unlike many lovers of art he wants life to follow art. This fact throws much light on the poet's nature of commitment. There is an effort in Ezekiel in some of his later poems to figure out distinctly his commitment to life and society. The 'Limped Style of Life' has often to encounter a 'Sluggish stream' or a 'muddy pool' in a city 'sick with slums.' The poet is no more a romantic idealist. He refuses to escape the time:

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

'In India' (47)  
Ibid., p. 73.  
(46) Ibid., p. 5.
These are the people "suffering the place and time" exactly as Ezekiel does. In his poetry the typical Indian city materialises with all its horror and ugliness before our eyes. It is his overwhelming cordiality that has come to accommodate and own the horrid reality of the urban scene.

Ezekiel distrusts institutional dogma and organized religion as they have failed to establish any meaningful discipline in life. Church going has become a mechanical meaningless ritual. The prayers that the people offer have taught them little discipline:

"The Roman catholic Goan boys
The white washed Anglo-Indian boys
The muscle bound Islamic boys
were earnest in their prayers
They copied bullied, Stole in pairs
They bragged about their love affairs
They carved the tables broke their chairs
But never missed their prayers.

- 'In India' - (48)

With regard to their social life, these young Indians talk of chastity and religion, but they never fail to flirt with foreign women. The poet in this poem has exposed the hypocrisy of urban Indian life in a place like Bombay. He has been sympathetic to the poor and the down-trodden, harsh and scathing towards the glossy hypocrites.

(48) Ibid., p. 73.
While the youths have their own way of living life, irrespective of their caste, community, creed and religion, they belong to, 'there is a kind of mechanical life style they all stick to.' During the process, they violate the norms of chaste living. They follow apparently their religions not in spirit. Religions now never hold them or sustain them as once they did.

The men and women of the elite society lead their lives on borrowed principles. Their way of life is different from the way their professed religion showed to them. They 'have double standards' in their dealings in life; that is because of the fear of social criticism. Thus, Ezekiel portrays the city life in all its brightness and ugliness as well. According to Linda Hess "the poet is fully alive to the ugliness, dirt, squalor and wickedness of a city like Bombay." "There is commitment," she further says, "towards realism in this poem expressed through a keen sense of irony."(49)

'Night of the Scorpion' is a poem that shows Ezekiel to be very much Indian rooted in Indian soil.

This poem is narrated in the first person singular. We are told that the poet's mother is stung by a scorpion on a rainy night. The scorpion had been concealing under a sack of rice.

(49) 'Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English' Quest-49 (Apr - June, '66), pp. 30-31.
As the peasants from neighbourhood heard the news, they come in large numbers and pray for her. These are simple people; they believed in prayer. They pray for the health and well being of the mother. Ezekiel's verse here grows incantatory and mantric. That is quite in keeping with the rural, superstitious background in the poem. The entire exercise sounds authentically Indian with its Mantric chant and spell. People sit around muttering their prayers and casting spells with 'the peace of understanding' on their faces. The poet comments that they are wise men who know how to exercise their powers and bring solace to the distressed mother in this hour of calamity.

Here in the poem the world of magic, superstition, irrationality and blind faith is juxtaposed with the world of science, rationalism and scepticism. The world of science is represented by the sceptic rationalist father, but here like the holy man, he tries 'powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.' He even pours a little paraffin upon the bitten toe and burns it to burn out the poison, and the son watches the flame with interest. While the father tries to tame the poison through scientific means, the superstitious neighbours continue their incantations. But the fact is that both the traditional, superstitious treatment and the modern scientific treatment prove to be equally futile. The mother has agony for full twenty hours. And the automatically subsides; the agony
No one accounts for the sudden recovery of the mother.

The poem presents to us a picture of an Indian family at an hour of calamity. The whole situation is seen in Indian context; the rationalist father with his science and reason, is ultimately converted to a credulous Indian villager. The father resorts to these remedies to save, as the poet rightly says, the woman of the house who is regarded as sacred deity in Indian households. What the poet's mother said at the end is most significant. The last lines of the poem are typical of an Indian mother:

My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
And spared my children.

'Night of the Scorpion' (50)

Here the mother feels highly grateful to the almighty that the scorpion has spared her children. She says that she is ready to undergo any kind of suffering for the sake of her children. The mother's affection transcends the efficacy of the remedies whether scientific or otherwise.

The poem 'Sotto Voce', as the title suggests is a serious soliloquy spoken in a whisper. It aims at self analysis. It is the poet's attempt to find out the meaning

of life and death:

"I often think of death
But cannot think the thought out to the end,
For that would be the end of thought,
Death or perfect peace
And life is imperfection."

- "Sotto Voce" (51)

Ezekiel's approach to life is one of an ardent philosopher. All that is natural and inevitable in life should be accepted. As life is enchanting so is death. One need not be bothered about unfulfilled desires, and dreams but one should try to live life in its fullness. This kind of attitude enhances the dignity of the poet's commitment.

The poem 'Enterprize' sounds like a fascinating allegory about man's predicament in this world.

Here the poet regards life as a journey, a pilgrimage. As Professor Iyengar points out, "the pilgrimage becomes a weary trek by the time the goal is reached." He says, 'It may be described as a miniature Ababasis: fancy fed, the goal is alluring, but the process of reaching it empties the victory of its glamour and glory." (52)

It is an attempt to show how an unfinished, incomplete man struggles here to come close to the ideal of

(51) Ibid., p. 33.
(52) 'Enterprise' - by Dr. R. Tilak, New Indian English Poetry, Rama Brothers, New Delhi, 1982, p. 45.
a complete, perfect man.

The poet along with some of his fellow citizens starts on a pilgrimage. They have in mind some romantic primitive coast as their destination. They start with hope, courage and determination, their minds filled with noble ideas and ideals. As they have their minds exalted, they are not afraid of any dangers or difficulties. 'All burdens' they feel to be light. This journey is symbolic of the stage of Edenic innocence which generally man enjoys in his boyhood and early youth. At this stage man is entirely innocent of frustrations and failures that occur in life ahead.

The next stage is one of exploration. The pilgrims' untested ideals are tested. The forces of nature are out to frustrate human endeavour. The oppressive heat of the sun in the poem thus becomes symbolic of the hostility of nature to human idealism and heroic aspirations.

The pilgrims in course of their journey are able to put up with dangers and difficulties for sometime. They continue their journey hopefully. They pass through cities where once a sage had taught, but they were not able to find out what he had taught, and what his message was. Their idealism degenerates into the trivial and the commonplace. That is the fate of all human beings at last.
The difficulties and dangers posed by man's physical surroundings are not so damaging as those that result from his own insufficiency. Soon there are differences of opinion among the pilgrims and they begin to quarrel over petty matters. They were to cross 'a desert patch' but they could not agree upon a suitable decision. The shadow of discord falls on their enterprise and it continues to grow. The poet suggests that quarrelsomeness, hatred, hostility are all part of human nature. And that is the reason why man carries with him the seeds of his failures which result into quarrels and frustrations. These pilgrims continue their journey despite quarrels and differences. The dissent among them divides them into groups, each group attacking the other. Bitterly engrossed in quarrels they lose their way, and thus forget their noble aspirations which had motivated their enterprise. Their goal and purpose are forgotten; their idealism is gone. The human spirit is overcome by frustrations and difficulties. Many do not have the courage to face the realities of life. They seek relief in escape and in withdrawal. Some try to pray for, and seek divine blessings forgetting the fact that God helps only those who help themselves. The leader of the group feels that they have reached the dead end of their journey. The group finds nothing as it moves on. The journey has lost its significance. They are no longer a disciplined group of devoted idealists but only a toiling crowd of defeated, persons; they are tired, and hopeless survivors who continue to trudge along through life. Their journey and its result are symbolic of man's life on the earth.
Tired and exhausted, engaged in their petty quarrels, even these people cannot hear the distant thunder which is symbolic of spiritual regeneration like the thunder on the Himavant in 'The Waste Land.'

The disillusionment of the pilgrims is total; they dispair of the worth and significance of their journey:

"When finally we reached the place,
We hardly knew why we were there
The trip had darkened every face,
Our deeds were neither great nor rare,
Home is where we have to gather grace."

- 'Enterprise' (53)

Chetan Karnani observes that the redemption for these men has to be sought either through the world or in one's own mind. By making the statement in generalized terms, Ezekiel manages to keep many options open to critics. "In a way, 'home' also refers to the city where life has to be lived with all its kindred glamour. If any grace is to be sought, it can only be within the city's confines and not outside." (54) 'Home is the reality principle which must be accepted, faced, and made the best use of. It also suggests of the poet's commitment and appropriately, though accidently, re-echoes the celebrated Sanskrit saying 'पुराणे वै देवताकर्म श्रवी,'

Here the journey that is undertaken is symbolic of the poet's quest for identity. The poet tells us that grace or redemption is possible not through negation of life but through its acceptance with its dirt and squalor; quarrels and conflicts. Grace is to be found only at home. But in so far as 'home' is a metaphor for the self, redemption has to be sought and won through one's own mind.

It is most instructive to note that Ezekiel's nature of creativity seems to form the sedater aspect of his commitment. This is quite evident in the poems which deal with the theme of his poetic creativity. One can examine here his poem 'Poet Lover, Bird Watcher.

In the poem the poet, the lover and the bird watcher exercise great patience in their respective pursuits. They have their strategies and plan of action followed with patience and diligence. They watch and wait. It is such a wait that marks distinctly the nature of modern poetry and artists. Unlike the romantics, the moderns are not spontaneous in their expression. They watch and wait for right expression, right word.

Ezekiel is admired for his reticent artistry in poetry. He dislikes passion and emotion. The poems look quite neat, precise and prosaic contrasting with excessively sentimental poems yester years. The best poet according to him, waits for the words just as 'patient love likes to relax on a
hill. As a birdwatcher is satisfied with the simple movement of 'a timid wing,' Ezekiel is satisfied with his simple and austere approach to life, poetry and art.

With darkness at the love and sense is found
By poets lost in crooked, restless flight,
The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

- Poet Lover, Birdwatcher (55)

In many of his poems, Ezekiel celebrates simple and ordinary virtues that make life decent, disciplined and delightful. "Planning" is one such poem:

"We knew exactly what to do and how,
Held our own against the thieves of time,
Prepared to start again, revise the vow
Should any concrete detail fail to rhyme."

- 'Planning' (56)

The poet's advice in the poem is to live life with a sense of dedication and commitment. And for that one should follow the poet's way of proper planning.

In life; the poet has always tried to have a clear-cut view of things. There is an attempt in his creativity to reach the exact and the relevant. The Lines in The Stone illustrate this idea.

(56) Ibid., p. 24.
"I have learnt to reveal in the stone,
Hand, cold, heavy, shapeless, solid stone,
To turn away from all that seems to flow
Elusively; time, water, blood around the bone."

'The Stone' (57)

It is evident from the study we have made that reticence, reconciliation, simplicity are the virtues of Ezekiel's creativity. They are the virtues that seem to form his commitment as well. He admits in all wisdom that:

"At last I have been reconciled
To simple nothingness."

'Nothingness' (58)

In the 'Morning Prayer' the poet's idea of commitment is very well illustrated. He says:

God grant me privacy.
Secretive as the mole
Inaccessibility,
but only of the soul
Whatever the enigma,
The passion of the blood
Grant me the metaphor
To make it human good.

'Morning Prayer' (59)

(57) Ibid., p. 25.
(58) Ibid., p. 32.
(59) Ibid., p. 65.
"Philosophy" is a simple piece of the poet's autobiography. It states the superiority of poetry over philosophy in a most effective way.

Ezekiel studied philosophy in London where 'Philosophy poverty and poetry' the three companions, shared his 'basement room.' Of these three companions, the poet shows how poetry triumphed and became a companion of perennial pleasure in his life.

"The mundane language of the senses sings Its own interpretations. Common things Become, by virtue of their commonness, An argument against the nakedness That dies of cold to find the truth it brings."

- 'Philosophy' (60)

The language of poetry is the language of human emotions. It is warm and cordial unlike the language of philosophy. Poetry studies common things, such as common human relationships, and so it is to be preferred to the cold abstractions of philosophy. Thus, poetry by virtue of its warmth of human emotions naturally surpasses the colder logic of reason and philosophy.

(60) Ibid., p. 71.
The poem as Raghukul Tilak remarks, "is an assertion of the superiority of the poet's own calling, a vindication of his stress on 'the ordinariness of most events,' which he considers are the proper study of poetry." (61)

The poet has gained much through simple and austere poetry. This reminds one of W.B. Yeats's idea of 'austerity of imagination':

"Simplicity, I know, you have achieved,
Beyond the reach of all but praise or love."
- Platonic (62)

These lines reflect the poet's typical attitude towards life. It is evident that his approach, to life and poetry both, is simple, and yet one of ardent dedication and lively commitment. He declares his love of life in the following lines -

Life is 'perennial dawn', 'beyond the reach of...absolute.'

(61) 'Philosophy' - Dr. Raghukul Tilak, 'New Indian English Poets and Poetry, Rama Brothers, New Delhi, 1982, p. 50.