CHAPTER - III

THE POETRY OF NISSIM EZEKIEL

3.1. BIOGRAPHY

3.1.1. Childhood and Education

Nissim Ezekiel was born on 14 December 1924 in Mumbai. His father, Moses Ezekiel, was a professor of Botany at Wilson College, and his mother was Principal of her own school. His father died in 1969 while his mother died in 1974. The Ezekiels belonged to Mumbai’s Jewish community, known as the ‘Bene Israel’. After finishing primary and secondary education he went to college and he completed B.A. in literature from Wilson College, Mumbai University. Also he completed M.A. English in Mumbai University in 1947. Then, he studied Philosophy at Birbeck College, London. He married Daisy Jacob in 1952, she was also Jewish. Then, for a short period he worked as a lecturer in English in ‘Khalsa College’, Bombay. The next stage of his life came with his departure to England for higher studies. He spent three and half years in London. During his stay in London, he evinced a keen interest in the theatre, in cinema, and in art. He also studied Psychology and Philosophy under the guidance of Professor C.E.M. Joad.

Nissim Ezekiel is acclaimed as the father of post-independence Indian–English verse. He is a trend-setter, who started modernity in Indian–English poetry. A group of contemporary Indian-English poets follow the simple, conversational style of Ezekiel. Not only in the style but also in the selection of themes one finds the influence of Ezekiel in the contemporary Indian English poets. However, he showed a much greater inclination towards literature.

Ezekiel was an editor of several Journals encouraging writing poetry, plays and criticism. He also asked many writers for translation, affecting the theory and practice for the young poets. The writers like Rilke and W.B. Yeats influenced Ezekiel. Like Yeats, he treated poetry, as ‘the record of the mind’s growth’. His poetic bulk indicates his growth as a poet-critic and shows his personal importance. He died on January 9th, 2004 after a long illness. Chetan Karnani states that “at the centre was that sincere devoted mind that wanted to discover itself. In the process he managed to forge a unique achievement of his own.”

3.1.2. Profession and Works
As a poet, dramatist, editor and art-critic, Nissim Ezekiel worked as a lecturer in English in Khalsa College. Prof. Ezekiel was the head of the Department of English in Mithibai College, Mumbai from 1961 to 1972. He rendered his service as visiting professor at University of Leeds in 1964, and University of Chicago and University of Pondicherry in 1967. He also worked as an art critic and advertising copywriter. After working as an advertising Copywriter and general manager of a picture frame in 1954 to 59, he Co-founded the literary monthly Jumbo, in 1961. In 1967, while in America, he experimented with LSD. In 1969, writer’s workshop, Kozhikode published his ‘The Daman plays’. Nissim Ezekiel also presented an art series of ten programmers for Indian television. He translated ‘Jawaharlal Nehru Poetry’ from Marathi into English in 1976. His poems are used in NCERT English textbooks. He also joined in his early life Shilpi advertising as a copy-writer in 1955, he was appointed the editor of a magazine called “Quest”, in 1954, and he also visited the U.S.A for four months as manager of Shilpi advertising.

Nissim Ezekiel has published several volumes of poems, essays, plays over the years; and these appeared under the following headings:

A] Volumes of Poetry

1) Time to Change -1952

2) Sixty Poems -1953

3) The Discovery of India -1956

4) The Third -1959

5) The Unfinished Man-1960

6) The Exact Name -1965

7) Sankeshin and other poems, translations of the Marathi poet Indira Saint -1974

8) Hymns in Darkness -1976

9) Latter, Day-Psalms -1982


B) Plays
1) Nalini

2) Marriage Poem

3) The Sleep –Walkers

4) Songs of Deprivation

5) Who Needs No Introduction

C) Editor

1) Indian writers in Conference -1964

2) Writing in India -1965

3) An Emerson Readers -1965

4) Martin Luther king Reader -1965

5) A Joseph King, Reader -1969

6) Arthur Millers All my Sons -1972

7) Another India, anthology of fiction and poetry -1990

D) Essays

I) In magazines and Papers (Literary Essays)

1) Ideas and Modern poetry -1964

2) The knowledge of dead secrets -1965

4) Poetry as knowledge -1972

5) Sri Aurobindo on poetry -1972

6) Should poetry be Read to Audience? -1972

7) K.N Daruwalla -1972

8) Poetry and philosophy -1966

9) Hindu society -1966

II) Essays on Art criticism
1) Modern Art in India -1970
2) How good is Sabavala- 1973
3) Painting of the year -1973

III) Essays on social criticism
1) How Normal is Normality -1972
2) Tradition and All that case Against the Hippies -1973
3) A Quest of sanity -1972
4) Our Academic Community -1968

E) His popular poems
1) Night of the Scorpion
2) The Doctor
3) Case, Study
4) Poster Prayers
5) The Traitor
6) Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher
7) Latter, Day-Psalms
8) The Railway Clerk
9) Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.
10) Enterprise
11) In the theatre
12) The Couple
13) Island
14) Minority Poems
15) Philosophy
16) Soap
17) The Patriot
18) Jewish Wedding in Bombay
19) The Hill
20) The Professor
21) In India.

3.1.3. Recognition and Awards

As a Man of letters Nissim Ezekiel is a ‘Protean Figure’. His achievements as a poet and playwright are considerable. His versatile genius can be found in his poetry, plays, criticism, Journalism and translation. He is a widely travelled man and delivered lecture in U.S.A, Australia and England as well as given poetry reading in those countries. He worked as a professor and Head of the Department of English at the Mumbai University on 20th April 1985. The Government of India conferred upon him the title of Padmashri in recognition of his service to literature and he was also a recipient of the ‘Sahitya Academy award for literature’. When he was an M.A student, he topped the University of Bombay in M.A English literature and won the R.K. Lagu Prize for it. He was the secretary of the Indian P.E.N from 1963 to 1966 and from 1968 to 1972. He also edited two P.E.N Conference Volumes. He conducted course in art appreciation for J.J. school of Art and some other institutions during 1969 -72. In 1973, he conducted a series of ten programmed in art appreciation for Bombay Television. In November 1974 he went for a tour of the United States on an invitation from the U. S. Government.
3.2. THEMES OF THE POETRY

3.2.1. The study of Philosophy, Psychology and Modernity

The Philosophy means the study of the phenomena of mind and matter and Psychology means the science of the mind. Nissim Ezekiel has subjected the poems of Philosophy and Psychology. He has made a tangible contribution to the philosophical poetry produced by indo-English poets. Indeed, Ezekiel has shown a certain profundity in his nature; and this profundity has found an expression in several poems written by him. The poetic self of Ezekiel has experienced too divergent pulls—the existential enigma the one hand, and the poetic enigma on the other. It is said that the poetic enigma implies the need for a correspondence between art and life. He has the sensibility of a modern poet whose self-confronts the fallen world and stands in an ironic contrast to the ideal world. He shows that the culture of the city and the repressive social codes in the modern world inhibit a man’s individuality and his freedom to grow. This culture spreads perversion in all walks of life. Thus, marriage has become more of a bondage in which a man and a woman lose their freedom and their identities, with the result that a ‘man is damned in that domestic game’. He therefore stresses the need of commitment, sincerity and integrity as essential conditions for the completeness of a poet; and without such completeness there can be no association of sensibilities so that a poet’s imagination would remain fragmented. Ezekiel has illustrated this view of his in the poem entitled ‘Enterprise’. In this poem the pilgrims face a paradox which is due to their want of commitment, sincerity and integrity. Towards the end of their journey, the pilgrims discover to their dismay that their destination called the center of vision is as unacceptable to them as the city from which they have tried to run away. In this poem, he points out which conviction that the grace of fulfillment consists in the identification of the self with the objective world. If such identification is achieved, the art, philosophy, religion and reality would all appear to be a unified concept. The poems entitled ‘Philosophy’ and ‘A Time to Change’ show Ezekiel’s philosophical bent of mind, although the former poem shows a distinct title towards poetry as compared to philosophy.
Nissim Ezekiel is also known as the Psychologist and poet of the mind. He shows a marked tendency to probe the human mind, and his poems reveal not only the conscious but also the sub-conscious thoughts and conflicts of human beings, and more particularly, his own thoughts and conflicts. Indeed, his primary concern is with man and man’s mind. The poem entitled ‘Case, Study’ is one of his several attempts at an exploration of his own mind. Here he portrays his own personality and his mind, though he appears here in disguise, making it seems that he is portraying somebody else. Self-exploration is also very much in evidence in the poem entitled ‘London’. Here the protagonist is searching and probing and the innermost recesses of his self. His personal quest goes on relentlessly. ‘Island’ is another of Ezekiel’s poem where we find the same search for the self-leading to a resigned acceptance of his environment. Indeed, Ezekiel may be described as an endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind. Satyanarain Singh observes that Ezekiel has been called “a pilgrim with a sense of commitment” whose poetry is “a metaphoric journey to the heart of Existence.”

Nissim Ezekiel’s poems are also the embodiments of some views about metaphysics, ethics and principles of life and so a study of these poems can enable one to arrive at what Ezekiel thinks on metaphysical, ethical and such other questions. So far as Ezekiel’s views of man’s relationship with the Supreme Being and man’s place in the Universe are concerned, he seems to believe that a man can know about the Supreme Being only what the Supreme Being reveals to him, and what that the reality is unfathomable. These views lie embodied in his ‘16th Hymns in Darkness’ in which he writes;

You are master

neither of death nor of life

Belief will not save you,

nor unbelief.

All you have

Is the sense of reality

Unfathomable

As it yields its secrets
Slowly
One
By
One [HD-62]

This assertion of his brings him close to the upholders of the theory that man cannot know more than what has been revealed to him in the field of theology. According to these theologians the Supreme Being reveals himself to man through prophets who plays the vital role of the medium. Ones efforts to know God according to them are, not of much consequence in case God chooses not to reveal Himself to one. Nissim Ezekiel seems to be of the opinion that the man desirous to know the reality has to make efforts as in this poem the unfathomable reality “yields its secrets” the use of the word. “Yield” is significant here as it signifies that the seeker is making efforts to seek. His describing reality as “unfathomable” signifies that, he is an agnostic as he holds that it is beyond human intellectual capacity to understand the reality.

Ezekiel finds God’s creation to be covered by humorous veils with the result that one who wants to know the universe has to remove these veils. Veil is the outer cover of the person. This view of his finds embodiment in the following lines of the poem ‘Theological’;

I’ve stripped off a hundred veils
and still there are more
that cover you creation

Why are you so elusive? [JASL-SP-99]

Ezekiel says that in this poem even man is hidden behind veils and it is not easy to remove all the veils and know the real man, as he writes in his poem ‘Theological’.

Even as myself, my very own
Incontrovertible, unexceptional
Self, I feel I am disguised. [JSAL-XI-3-4-P-99]

Ezekiel disagrees with Wordsworth when in ‘Dilemma’, he says in this poem,

“I shake with intimations
Ezekiel rejects sectarian approaches according to most of which one is going to be saved only if one belongs to a particular sect. He adopts the secular approach enshrined in the constitution of India according to which it is regarded as immaterial as to what one’s sect, is and one gets the civil rights if one is citizen of India. Ezekiel says in Latter-Day Psalms;

Salvation belongs unto the
Lord - it is not through.
One or other church
They blessing is upon
All the people of the earth [LDP-40]

Ezekiel’s assertion that salvation belongth into the “Lord” signifies that god accords salvation to people irrespective of their churches or sects. In other words he rejects the claims of those who claim that one can attain salvation only when one is a follower of Jesus Christ as Jesus sacrificed himself in order to save man. He believes that only Lord gives salvation.

However, there are poems which make it evident that Ezekiel also posits his belief in mysticism for instance, when in the ‘12 th of the Hymns in Darkness’, he writes;

Don’t curse the darkness
Since you’re told not to,
But don’t be in a hurry
To light a candle either.
The darkness has its secrets
Which light does not know.
It’s a kind of perfection
While every light
Distorts the truth [HD –P-59]
This statement has an appeal not to the ordinary reason but to the higher reason. Nissim Ezekiel is aware of the fact that even if one makes a detailed plan and proceeds working in accordance with it, there do occur unforeseen interferences. He calls them the doing of; a long/Arresting arm, the unseen, the unknown. [JSAL-XI 3-4, p. 24]

In his ‘Philosophy’, Ezekiel does not trust all spiritual teachers as many of them are spurious. He does not believe on holy person. He exposes one such teacher in his poem ‘Guru’, when he says, that this teacher lived a life of sin in his past days, is faithless to his friends, in “ungratified” for “favours done” and it greedy enough to be polite to foreigners but rude to visitors from his own country because he is likely to be given more money by the foreigners than by his own country-men. The poet finds this teacher to be;

…..over scrupulous in checking
the accounts of the Ashram.[HD-25]

The details, which the poet has given, indicate the Guru’s interest in his own material well-being rather than in his or anybody’s spiritual well − being.

In his poem ‘Portrait’, he ridicules a man who is “foolish still”, even though he is “(n) o longer young”, and is wanting in will to change himself, and make improvements in his thinking. The poet further ridicules the man when he gives some other details of the man; his faith has broken, his toughened will have taken the form of sadness, and he hopes to change himself by play. The poet seems to be suggesting that one can attain improvement in the spiritual field when one discards one’s follies, and has a will strong enough to improve oneself spiritually.

The poet also ridicules of the healers who adopt widely divergent may even contradictory, approaches. Some of them prohibit meat and drinks while other allow it, but they assure everybody that god’s love remains everyone’s heritage and they ask everybody to get his Shakti –awaking. The poet records the healers’ teachings in the following words;

Sex is prohibited or allowed.

Meat and drinks are prohibited

Or allowed. Give up

everything or nothing
and be saved. The Master
knows the secret.

God’s love remains your heritage.

You need not change
Your way of life
Know your mantra, meditate,
release your Kundalini,
get your Shakti awakening
and float with spirit
to your destination. [LDP-14]

They seem to believe that one can get one’s Kundalini released simply by asking it to get released! G. Nageswar Rao asserts that “in a general sense one may describe his work as that of a religious philosophical poet. He is widely read and except for Islam, one finds a pervading spirit of such different religion as Buddhism, Zen, Hinduism and Christianity in his poetry and the basic simplicities of living throughout the poetry of Ezekiel appear to be his deep moral need. A desire to live life on nature’s terms is almost out of the reach of only modern man, particularly the urban sophisticated man. The only possibility is to live a sane life in accordance with the basic simplicities of human nature: frankness, honesty, simplicity, truth, friendship tenderness and love and patiently to build a life with these.”

Nissim Ezekiel describes the gulf between Buddhism, Zen, Hinduism and Christianity are also wide that it is more than impossible to bridge them. For instance, Christianity regards man to be a sinner and holds that if a man wishes to be saved he must accept the church as his guide, while Shankaracharya, the great Hindu philosopher regards man as a manifestation of the Supreme Being Himself, meaning thereby that man is as much divine as the Supreme Being. There is so wide a gulf between these two views that there is no possibility of reconciling them. How can, then, one be a Christian and a Vedantic Hindu at the same time? Buddhism regards the teaching of Gautam the Buddha to be one’s safe guide while the Zen thinkers refuse to accept
Buddha’s eightfold path and expect one to attain enlightenment and then to arrive at one’s own conclusion. In such a situation it is impossible for one to be Buddhist and a Zen at the same time.

Ezekiel admits that human beings have vices which they cannot get rid of and cannot acquire virtues they do not have. But since it is his nature to behave like that, it must be so because man has been made to be so. And so it is the maker rather than man that is responsible for this state of affairs. That is why the poet regards it as God’s duty to rescue man. He says, so in the second of the ‘Poster Prayers’ when he prays;

The vices I’ve always had
I still have
The virtues I’ve nearer had
I still do not have
From this human way of life
Who can rescue man
If not his maker?
Do thy duty, Lord! [JSAL, XI, 3-4, p.133]

Ezekiel regards prosperity as a desirable thing and likes to be rich even though Jesus Christ says that a rich man cannot enter the gate of heaven even if a camel can go through the eye of a needle. He disguises about rich person. Ezekiel prays;

Let me be, O Lord,
The Camel of the Higher Income Group
Who passes smooth through
The eye of that needle [JSAL, X1-3-4-P-134]

Knowledge is another thing he considers desirable and prays to his Lord:

Give me as much knowledge
as I need, and then some more.
The extra since or two
from your bread of love and truth

is only for me greed.

You know what lies beyond my hunger.

Overlook, O Lord, my love of food. [Ibid, p-136]

Ezekiel has realized that wisdom lies in one’s having respect for the near and affection for the familiar, and as in his 18th ‘Poster Prayers’ he says;

Respect for the near
affection for the familiar,
these I have learnt
late but not too late.

Let me never lose them, Lord. [JSAL, XI 3-4, p-13]

If one has no respect for the near, one becomes alienated because one always finds oneself with the near and never with the remote. Likewise, his unfamiliar is beyond one’s reach and so if one likes to be loved on must have affection for the familiar.

Ezekiel believes that it is essential for people to change even though he holds that sanity wants man not to change. He says so in his poem ‘Dilemma’ when he says;

“Change, they say,
or die of sanity” [LDP -30]

What he says here is tantamount to say that life wants man to change and so one who wants life to go on will have to change. Want of change is synonymous with death even though it is sane to remain unchanged.

Adversities and misfortunes visit a man, according to Ezekiel, to teach him truths. That is why he invites God to send him misfortunes and he says in the following lines;

Kick me around
a bit more, O Lord.
I see at last
There’s no other way
For me to learn
Your simplest truths. [JSAL-IX-3, P.133]

Ezekiel posits faith in the natural process which revives a man’s energy by making him just sleep. He does so in his poem ‘Process’ where he says;

Just when you give up
the whole process
begins again
and you are as pure
as if you had confessed
and received absolution. (JSAL-XI-3-4, P.117)

When a man is tired he simply goes to sleep and when he gets up next morning he is fresh even though he has done nothing to regain that freshness. It is miracle according to the poet and he says:

You have done nothing
to deserve it,
you have merely slept
and got up again,
feeling fine
because the morning is fine;
sufficient reason surely
for faith in a process
that can perform such miracles
without assistance from you, (Ibid, p.117)
Nissim Ezekiel is also a poet of the city, a poet of the body, and an endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, and he is constantly striving to define himself and to find through all “The Myth and Maze” a way to honesty and love, Ezekiel believes that, as long as the city man lacks a perception of the imaginative reality, he is bound to remain incomplete or unfinished, and he would continue to suffer from “the pain of his fragmented view”. In the poem entitled ‘A Morning Walk’, witness exactly such a person. The existence of such a man is without “light”: and the “barbaric city, sick with slums”, cannot prove to be a source of grace to him. By bringing the protagonist of his poems close to an awareness of their situation, Ezekiel suggests the possibility of redemption for himself as well as for other who live in the city. From this point of view, Ezekiel’s art is highly therapeutic. As a result of this aesthetic therapy, he finds several of his poetic characters on the threshold of a new awaking: and this is a mental state in which self-analysis plays a major role. In the poem on titled ‘Marriage’, Ezekiel depicts the failure of his own conjugal life. However, the author subsequently found that his conjugal life with his wife was tending to make him regret the marriage; and the same was his wife’s impression of their conjugal life, thus, they now felt like the biblical person, Cain, who murdered his brother Abel and who, thereafter, spent many years of regret, repentance, and aimless wandering in a mood of desolation. Marriage is the complex situation of poet’s mind.

Ezekiel calls his dwelling, place Bombay his Island. To quote from “Island”,

I cannot leave the Island
I was born here and belong. (Ezekiel, collected poems -182)

It is an Island of slums and skyscrapers, distorted ethos, dragon calming to be human, ignorance, yet he is not ready to leave it. Awasthi says that “He loves the city despite its ugliness and wickedness” [Awasthi-81]. “He has keenly observed both; pleasant and unpleasant aspects of it and both of them are evident in his poetry [Awasthi-82]. After visiting England and realizing the pain of alienation he has decided to come back to his “backward place”, Bombay and to Israel or any other place. That shows his rootedness in India.”

Ezekiel is highly optimistic in his poetry. There is no atmosphere of dejection. Even though life is full of sorrows and problems one aspires to live a happy life. In the words of Shreehar Gautam, “Ezekiel rejects dejection because poetry is central to his life. Unlike many
other poets, he brought a sense of discipline, self-criticism and mastery to Indian English poetry.”  

Ezekiel portrays the lives of the extremes in the society. The negative features of the lower strata as well as the elitist world of five-star hotels make contents for his poems. ‘Night of the Scorpion’ is one of Ezekiel’s poems which is very favorite to the westerners as it reinforces one of their comforting myths about India. It is about a typical incident in an Indian village. The poet describes Indian social situation. The speaker’s, mother is bitten by a scorpion. All the neighborhood rushes into help. They come in the rainy night with lanterns and try all kinds of remedies. When nothing helps, they resort to prayers for the lady. Fortunately, the pain decreases and she recovers after a day. The poet makes the incident sound real of Indians, he writes:

The peasants came like swarms of flies
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times

to paralyze the Evil one. [Ezekiel, collected poems-131]

V.M. Madge writes on the poem, “The Metropolitan contempt for the rural population is reflected in the image of peasant coming “like swarms of files” and “buzzing” the name of God a hundred times. Pests they are, they cannot come any other way, and they cannot rush to the scene of the tragedy like brothers in a family but only as “swarms of flies.””

Ezekiel copies and incident in this poem which is practiced even today in several villagers of India. Holy men performing rites and incantations as to cure diseases are usual sights in many parts of the country. Majority of the villagers are superstitious and they believe that prayers and incantations are the only solution for diseases. The speaker’s father in the poem is representative of a few educated people who are rationalists and sceptics. The mother’s exclamation at the end –Thank God, the scorpion picked on me and spared my children (cp.131) has been duly singled out for praise as indicative of Ezekiel’s “Indian sensibility”. What has sadly gone unnoticed is the image of India being doled out to the world, the note of patronization and condescension in this poem. No matter how much India has progressed; it needs cause no flutter in the rest of the world. Ezekiel, the leading poet here gives out a comforting reassurance that it continues to be a land of superstition and foolish sentiments, as if patients are not taken to hospitals for scorpion bites, as if Indian mother do not thank doctors for relieving them of pain.
R. Parthasarathy points out that in ‘Night of the Scorpion’, the scorpion is identified with the Evil one, and hence an impressive ritual is enacted to exercise this Evil one.” 7 The poem reads:

May he sit still, they said.
May your suffering decrease
the misfortune of your next birth, they said.
May the sum of evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain,
may the poison purify you flesh
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
they said, and they sat around. (Ezekiel, Collected poems-131)

The poem is indeed, rich in many aspects; stylistically, structurally and thematically. The tension between two clashing attitudes is also brought out effectively: the attitudes of traditional world of superstition and the modern scientific scepticism and rationalism.

‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’ is a satire on the English language or the urban Indians, particularly English of the people of Bombay. Written in the form of a farewell speech, the poem revels in a mood of good humoured parody and it the way of Indians to speak English language. The occasion is Miss Pushapa “is departing for foreign”. Shirish Chindhade says that “This poem is modern phenomena in the modern civil society in the world. The rambling style typical of a speech is telling employed; all logic is taken leave of, and typical Indian thought processes are expressed”. (Chindhade. 41) “English being the second language to Indians, it is quite natural that English of the majority in India.” 8

Nissim Ezekiel continues in ‘Background, Casually’;

I have made my commitments now,
This is one; to stay where I am,
As other choose to give themselves

In some remote and backward place. [Ezekiel, collected poems -181]

These lines reflect that Ezekiel is totally committed to Indian as he has no place to go. He understands that he cannot get rid of his sense of being an Indian. “Now he is part of India as India is the part of his soul”. A passage in Ezekiel’s well known essay, “Naipaul’s India and mine” shows the importance of India in his life. In the India which I have presumed to call mine, I acknowledge without hesitation the existence of all darkness Mr. Naipaul discovered…..to…. other countries I am a foreigner. In India I am an Indian.” ⁹ [Awasthi-81]

*Latter-Day Psalms* is culturally different text, written with a subaltern motive to recapture ‘space’ for the poet and his culture. The imperialistic growth of nationalism in the form of nativism got unprecedented growth in the Southern States, especially in Maharashtra. The flourishing culture of Marathas narrowed downs to imperialism and under ‘Shiv Sena’, the racists over thousands of non-Marathas in Bombay.

Fed Mathew writes on the poem;“it is against this political and historical ‘background’ or rather, ‘Foreground’ that Ezekiel, the poet of Mumbai, writes the poems in the collection.” ¹⁰

*Latter-Day Psalms*, Psalms are originally folklores which are totally transmitted from generation to generation. They cherish the myth, celebrate the exploits of great leader; gradually interpolate these things into the collective consciousness. Ezekiel seemingly parodies the collection of collections by calling out the significant nine Psalms….. The imperialistic environment of Mumbai and Maharashtra forces the old champion of nativism to create ‘space’ for his identity with a single quatrains the poet elucidates the problem;

Cast off, scattered for a

Thousand years, where shall

we live in peace with our

Neighbours? [Ezekiel, collected poems 256]

According to Ramkrishna “Modern writers have a tendency to justify the complexity of their writing on the ground that modern life is complex. However, the complexity can be
presented in deceptively simple, form, as sometimes the profoundest philosophical truths are presented.”

Ezekiel wants simplicity of thought and language in modern poetry. He extends the concept of simplicity to form in poetry. In rhythm he would aim at the natural, the flowing the direct and the informal or conversational. Ezekiel became the pioneer of “New poetry” by his greater variety and depth than any other poet of the post-independence period.

According to Mallikarjun Patil “P. Lal and Dom Moraes have admitted the fact that “Nissim Ezekiel was their poetic father…. The other poets of the young generation think that Ezekiel is perhaps the first Indian poet consistently to show Indian readers that craftsmanship is an important to a poem as its subject matter….What Thomas Hardy was to England in the early twentieth century, Ezekiel is to India in the post-independence era. In fact, he is a great spirit to Indian poets in English for several decades.”

3.2.2. As Poet of the Metropolis

Nissim Ezekiel has made an equally substantial contribution to Indo-English poetry by having written poems depicting Indian life, more particularly city life, vividly and realistically. Many are the poems in which he has depicted the sights which are seen daily in the city of Bombay, though he has depicted the sights in a witty and satirical vein. The poem entitled ‘In India’ is an outstanding example of how realistic imagery. Here, he has enumerates the city sights, focusing our attention up on the poverty of the people as represented by the beggars, hawkers, pavement sleepers and the dwellers in slums. Here, he also draws our attention to the burning of woman who did not bring enough dowries, and to the virgin who are frightened of being molested by rogues and ruffians “bunt –out mothers”, frightened virgins”. The poem entitled “The truth about the floods” also belongs to the category of realistic poems, though here is not particularly speaking about city life.

Both Rajeev Tarnath and Meena Belliappa agree, “That the urban theme forms an important strain in Ezekiel’s poetry; and this theme runs through all the anthologies published by the poet.”
The poet is fully alive to the ugliness, dirt, squalor and wickedness of a city like Bombay. This is the theme of number of his lyrics like, ‘Morning Walk’. In ‘Morning Walk’, there is the picture of a monsoon –lashed city thickly populated with penurious wretches;

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 -likes masses, many –tongued,
Whose wages are in words and crumbs. [CP-119]

Such a city has a very harmful influence on the poet’s perception. The trees look like ghosts and lose their personal identity; the more he stared the less he saw among the individual trees. They look like petals on a wet, black bough. According to Linda Hess “He is a poet of the city, Bombay.” 14

In a later poem called ‘Island’ he describes Bombay as a pleasure Island of slums and skyscrapers. This is definition of his attitude to the city. India is his atmosphere and career. For others the city may be unsuitable for song since it has nothing conventionally ‘Poetic’ to offer. The single image of the flower defines the poet’s attitude: gentle, dedicate and lovable. Additionally, it is also subtle image of growth and, finally, decays. It reflects not only the growth of the poet’s mind but the growth of the phenomenon of the city itself. Both slums and skyscrapers are growths towards spiritual decay: slums because of poverty and skyscrapers because of hypocrisy. Party craze is a legitimate symptom of this spiritual decay.

‘Urban’, in The Unfinished Man is a remarkable and unforgettable poem in this respect. It tells us of the city man, who is caught up in the phantasmagoria of sex and power and for whom there is no redemption at his best, he has a dim recognition of that part of his being dreams of higher levels of existence.
Inder Nath Kher comments that “The person in this poem is passionately attached to the city and its worn–out tracks of custom and habit. He is always at a great distance from the “hills” which symbolize the loftiness of spirit. His river of life is dry, and the winds lie dead in his path meaning that he is devoid of the creative breath which has the power of regeneration. He does not perceive the rebirth of the skies such morning nor does he feel the reclining fingers of the shadows of the night on his eyes. In other words, he does not experience the life- death continuum within himself. There is no place for the sun and the rain in his closed system indicating that he lacks light or warmth , as well as the fertilizing power of creativity.”

But while contemplating the city, and the horrors of life in it, the poet does not fail to perceive, as well as to communicate to the readers the fact that even such a city as Bombay has its roots in the pastoral, and the primitive. The two contraries exact sides by side fuse and mingle and are harmonized by the alchemy of the poet’s genius. The primordial and the urban are integrated. For example in a poem like the “love-sonnet” the hill on which the lovers meet, is not very remote from the city lights. There exists a tangible relationship between the urban and the primitive, the lover look down from the hill at the distant sea which they perceive as passionate and perpetual mystery. The sea symbolizes the flux between life deaths. With this imaginative awareness the lover descend the hill in the manner of floating on a cloud, and their mingling with humanity is achieved without any dissonance.

The metropolitan city of Bombay figures most prominently in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. Indeed, he may be described as essentially a poet of the city. So, it is said that no modern Indian English poet has given a more comprehensive picture of the various fact of metropolitan life than Ezekiel has done.

Another critic, Urmila Varma; has given us an able to analysis of Nissim Ezekiel’s interest in depicting the people and the life of the city which he regards almost as his native city even though he belongs to a migrant Jewish family who had settled down there and made the city their home. According to Urmila Varma, “Ezekiel has identified himself completely with Indian, and more particularly with the city of Bombay; and this identification sustains him as a writer and as a human being.”

In fact, Ezekiel has said that Indians backwardness coincides with his own. He has further stated that India is his environment and that a man can do something for his environment
not by withdrawing from it but by remaining in it. Actually he has done about India. It may here be made clear that Nissim Ezekiel is a critic and a censor of the city life as he sees it, and not champion or a sponsor or even an apologist of it. In poem after poem, he has exposed to ridicule the ugly spots of the city and the failing, shortcoming, and deficiencies of city life. He finds the city of Bombay to be a sick and ailing city, inhabited by people who are sick too. The sickness is not just physical and environment but also mental, requiring the attention of a psychiatrist. He finds Bombay to be poverty-stricken, noisy, and polluted. He calls it “a barbaric city”, full of slums, deprived of seasons, cursed with a million purgatorial lanes; it means dirty, abhorrent, repellent, narrow streets. He refers to its hawkers, its beggars asking for charity in loud voices, and it’s many tongued laborers who get their wages not in cash but in words and in crumbs. In one of his poems he gives as an aerial view of the city, including its civilized as well as backward parts of it.

In this poem Ezekiel tells us that the city remains within him wherever he goes. He says that, after a night of love, he left the city with an intention to come back to it but that somehow he carried the city within him, its markets and courts of Justice, its slums, it football grounds, its entertainment hall, its residential flats, its places for art and business houses, its harlots it basement poets, its princes and its fools. Thus, he takes notice not only of the pleasant aspects of the city but even more so, of the unpleasant aspects of it. In his poem Ezekiel also takes attention of the readers, he builds up a very vivid city scene, referring to the newspapers, cinemas, speeches demanding peace by men and grim, warlike faces, posters selling health and happiness in bottles, and promises of large returns to small investments in football pods. Here again we have miscellaneous imagery covering the good and the bad features of city life. The reference to posters selling health and happiness in bottles is evidently intended to remind us of the quacks who sell bogus medicines to make money for themselves rather than to cure the people of their maladies.

Ezekiel finds in the city, the people search for solace, comfort, and peace of mind but they fail to achieve this aim. In fact, they feel lost in the city to which they belong and in which the author himself dwells as “an active fool”. In the city, the fog is thick, and the men get lost. This metaphorically refers to the ignorance of the people and their lack of direction. The people there do not realize the growing cost of cushy jobs and unloved wives. These people can be described as men of straw, having no feeling or sensibility.
The people of Ezekiel’s city lead sterile, dull, monotonous lives. In the poem entitled ‘Occasion’, Ezekiel the routine of south Indian, and middle–aged, balding man without a face or a figure? This man has to wait for half an hour in a queue to catch a bus; then he has to spend fifteen minutes in the bus; then he has to travel by a train for forty minutes, and finally he has to walk a long distance from the railway station to the slum in which he lives.

Ezekiel describes in his poetry more women than perhaps in the work of any other Indian poet in English and the interaction between man and woman is major concern of Ezekiel’s oeuvre. Very early in collected poems -1952-1988. One comes across the native heroine of ‘An Affair’ who is taken to a cinema to see a movie, which unfortunately for her escort, happens to be something of a run of the mill potboiler with its usual dose of sex and violence. The villain’s effort to that the lovers’ plans prove, needless to say abortive;

And then she said: I love you, just like this
As I had seen the yellow blonds declare
Upon the screen, and even stroked my hair.
But hates me now because I did not kiss. [CP -11]

In the poem ‘Hangover’, Ezekiel depicts the people of both the upper and the lower middle classes, including the ordinary people such as typists, drunkards, and harlots. He speaks here of a non-drinker drinking, a non-smoker smoking, the red–coated waiter of Harbour Bar, and the dancing girl in the red light district.

Ezekiel says in his poem that a man fails to establish a lasting relationship with any woman: and so there is a general feeling of frustration and of discontent among the men. In the poem entitled ‘Quarrel’, mangoes in search of a woman in order to establish an emotional bond with her, but his efforts prove futile. He talks to her during the night but his talk resembles a troubled dream of many words, unaccompanied by a single kiss. In another poem, ‘To a Certain Lady’, a man’s encounter with a woman proves to be a disappointing exercise in sex. Ezekiel here depicts the woman as a kind of leech sucking the man’s flesh and he describes the sexual act in this case as a crude acceptance of the mutual physical need, referring to it as a tasteless encounter in the dark, a kind of companionship with neither love nor hate.
Ezekiel’s own relationship with the city may be described as a love-hate relationship. He hates the many unpleasant and disgusting aspects of city life in India and yet he feels attracted by the city life because of his feeling that by making the people aware of the miserable condition in which they live he may be able to bring about some improvement. And his desire to improve the condition of life shows his Indianness or his commitment to, if not love for, this country.

In a poem entitled ‘Urban’ Ezekiel describes the urban sensibility and a city – dweller’s reaction to Nature. The city dweller neither sees the morning sky nor feels the darkness of night descending upon him. He welcomes neither the sun nor the rains; and he sees no ups and downs in the landscape before him. He dreams of morning walks; but in his mind is the city traffic away from the beach and tree and stone. His world of dreams and the world of stark realities stand apart; and his sense of mystery or novelty is swamped by the urban environment. The more he stares, the less he sees among the individual trees.

3.2.3. The Theme of Alienation

Abram defines alienation, is the concept of German dramatist ‘Bertolt Brecht’, adapted the Russian formalist concept of “defamilirization” into what he calls the “Alienation effect.”\(^17\) The German term is also translated as estrangement effect or distancing effect; the last is closest to Brecht’s notion, in that it avoids the connotation of jadedness, incapacity to feel, and social apathy that the word “alienation” has acquired in English. It is used to make familiar aspects of the present social reality seem strange, so as to prevent the emotional identification or involvement of the audience with characters and their actions in play. His aim was instead to evoke a critical distance and attitude in the spectators, in order to arouse them to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the state of society and behavior represented on the stage.

Nissim Ezekiel is known as new poet to publish a collection of poetry, easily one of the most notable post-Independence Indian English writers of verse. His A Time to Change appeared in 1952, to be followed by Sixty poems [1953], The Third [1959], The Unfinished Man [1960] and The Exact Name. In Ezekiel’s poetry is that he belongs to a Bene –Isreal family which migrated to India generations ago. Thus, substantially, aware of this alienation being accentuated by the fact that he has spent most of his life in highly westernized circles in cosmopolitan Bombay. With Marathi as his “last mother tongue” and English as his “second mother tongue”, Ezekiel’s quest for integration made for a restless career of quick changes and experiments
including, ‘philosophy/ poverty and poetry’, in London basement room, and attempts at Journalism, publishing and advertising and even a spell of working as a factory manager- before he settled down as a university teacher in his “bitter native city”.

The alienation theme is thus central to Ezekiel’s work and colors his entire poetic universe. This explains his early fascination for Rilke, though he learnt his poetic craft from Eliot and Auden, whom he frequently echoes in his early verse. “A refugee of the spirit” in search of his “dim identity”, which in different moods appears to him to be either a “one man lunatic asylum” or a “small deserted holy place”, Ezekiel experiments with three different solutions to his problem. The easiest way out is protective assumption of easy superiority expressing itself in surface irony as in his ‘Very Indian Poems in Indian English’, in which the obvious linguistic howlers of Indian students are pilloried with metropolitan and snobbishness. But at his best Ezekiel does succeed in creating something more than minor verse out of his alienation as in ‘Night of the Scorpion’.

May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said
May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
may the sum of evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain, they said. (CP.130)

It is one of the finest poems in recent Indian English literature. Here, the tale, which lies in the sting, is told by an observer, who is neither flippantly ironical nor anti-spastically detached; on the contrary, he invests the poem with deep significance by trying to understand the Indian ethos and its view of evil and suffering, though he makes no claim to sharing it.

Occasionally, Ezekiel has been able to create some really great poetry out of his experience of alienation. ‘Night of the Scorpion’ is an excellent example of this. Here, while presenting the Hindu–Buddhist approach to the mysteries of evil and suffering, and showing it in
sharp contrast with the diametrically opposed responses such as the scientific attitude on the one hand, and the maternal instinct on the other, the poet does try to maintain a neutrality of tone, while signs of the usual irony also perceptible. We do find here Ezekiel trying sincerely to understand the responses which he describes, making it clear at the same time that he cannot share them. It is the alienational impulse, balanced by an honest effort at an understanding of the situation that creates the poetry in ‘Night of the scorpion’.

According to M. K. Naik, “Ezekiel has not succeeded fully in transforming his feeling of alienation into any major poetic utterance, except occasionally as in ‘Night of the Scorpion’ even though he has offered us many interesting variations on the theme of alienation.”

His autobiographical poem, ‘Background, Casually’ gives an emphatic expression though in satirical vein, to his social and cultural alienating from the country to which he does not really belong but which he has adopted as his own environment. In that poem he tells us that he had gone to Roman Catholic school where he found himself a mugging Jew. He also tells us that a Muslim sportsman had boxed his ears, and that, as a consequence, he had grown up in terror of strong-bodied fellows. The Hindu boys, he says, had been tormenting him in their own way; and one day he had felt compelled to produce a knife to threaten the boys who were persecuting him. This sense of alienation, beginning at school, has clung to Ezekiel throughout his life despite his best efforts to come to terms with this country and its people. In the poem already named, he refers to those efforts, saying that he has made his commitments and that one of those commitments is to continue living in this country and to adopt himself to the conditions of life which prevail in Bombay city even though he strongly disapproves of, and dislikes, those conditions. The poem; ‘Background, Casually’ is one of the biographical poems of Ezekiel which shows him to a very Indian poet writing in English. It expresses his total commitment to India. The poet reflects on his failure and achievement and gives expression to his love for the soil in unequivocal terms. He affirms that he is very much an Indian and that his roots lie deep in India. Ezekiel has not inherited the great classical tradition of India, of Vedas and Upanishads, but not to the extent he has availed himself of the composite culture of India to which he belongs, he must be said to be and important poet not merely in the Indian context, but in consideration of those that are writing poetry anywhere in English. There is plenty of Itemized biography in the poem, and the background the past has been elaborated at some length.
The poet thought he alienated, he felt himself he was not a Hindu, but a Jew. He had to face much hardship at school. He was sent to a Roman Catholic school where he was ill-treated by Christian boys, for it was the Jew, his people, who had betrayed Christ. He was a mugging Jew among those wolves. They were Christians, but they knew no Christian charity. But Ironically enough, it was this hated Jew and not one of the Christian boys, who won, the scripture prize, thus showing that he scripture prize, he was better read in the Christian scripture than the Christians, themselves. But his joy was short-lived for we are told in the very next line, that a Muslim boxed his ears. A lone Jew, he was ill-treated both by the Muslims and the Christians.

Ezekiel says in his poem the Hindus were equally unkind. They were great bullies. They were undernourished, but they were strong and they terrorized the poor Jew. He too looked down upon them, for their propositions were always wring, they were dullards, and they were inactive and lazy. One day there was a noisy quarrel and the boy; poet had to use his knife to defend himself.

Nissim Ezekiel was the observer and explainer of Hindu, Muslim and Christian community. Continuing with the Ironical account of his background the poet says that they wanted to make him a rabbi- a Jewish priest but bit of self-analysis showed him that his morals had declined, and he was not worthy of the noble profession. On Friday nights, there were prayers at home, and he was thus made aware of his own wickedness. He heard the preaching of Hindu Yogis and a Jewish priests, but nothing could him better and nobler. He had no religious zeal at all.

He describes his school and classmates and living condition in London. Time passed, school days were over, and at the age of twenty two he was sent of England for higher study, with the help of family friend who paid the fare. In lines, which have become famous and which are frequently quoted, he tells us that in London, ‘Philosophy Poverty Poetry’ were his three companions who shared his “basement room”. He had actually lived for sometime in a basement room in London and had found it immediately good and hospitable. It was from here that he had observed the outside world with zeal and interest. The Image of the basement room recurs in number of his poems.
He lived in London for two years, all alone without job, a hard and cheerless life, without participating actively in the life that went around him. At last he realized the bitter truth that he was a failure, and decided to return to India. As he was too poor to pay his fare, he worked as a menial servant to an English cargo ship carrying French guns and mortal shell to Indo-China. He did the menial job of scrubbing the ship but he felt quite happy and at ease. Thus he returned to India a total failure. He had studied a bit of philosophy. Of no use to him in life, and thus his studies merely increased his confusion and perplexity. He was faced with the problem of adjusting himself to his circumstances, and making the best of his opportunities. He did not know what to do and now to feel at home. Then in the best tradition of the westernized Indians, like Nirad Chaudhuri and V. S. Naipaul, there is an indictment of the Hindus:

All Hindus are
Like that, my father used to say,
When someone talked too loudly, or
Knocked at the door like the devil. (CP. 235)

They hawked and spat. They sprawled around. But in spite of all such difficulties, the poet has remained attached to the country of his choice and to the city, Bombay which he has made his home. In course of time, he committed the worst possible folly, i. e. married since then he has frequently changed his job. Such has been his past, his back ground of which he sings, but he knows that much more still remains to be sung. He must also sing of his ancestry and early experiences as a child. Soon again he returns to the past. He tells us that his ancestors belonged to the Saturday oil pressing caste popularly called Shanwar tallies. It was in this way that they earned their living. He remembers even the hooded bullock that he used to observe as a child, which went round and round moving the oil seed crushing machine. He is also reminded of a Major in the British army who told them frightening stories of the Boer War in Africa. Such stories frightened the child Nissim, and he would have frightening dreams. For example, he would dream that fierce man had bound his hand and feet.

Such were his childhood dreams. But now as grown up man and poet, he dreams only of words. He did not realize that words can betray. He continued to write poems till he had lost his grip on reality and so missed the worldly sense. Given an opportunity, he would not repeat this
folly. Even now despite all bitterness and disappointment, he tries to cultivate greater clarity of vision, to have a better understanding of life and its problems and to continue to serve the cause of poetry as well as he can. Others may consider him a fool, but wisdom consists in making the best of ones opportunities. He therefore, makes the best use of both inner and outer storms i.e. he expresses in his poetry his inner tensions, passions and frustrations, as well as the failures and difficulties that life has in store for him. Such personal experiences constitute the theme of his poetry.

Just as he is totally committed to his chosen profession as also he is committed to the country of his choice and to the city of Bombay which he has made his home. The climate is too hot for him it sears his eyes but his foreign friends who visits him who writes him from abroad, are surprised that exaggerate the difficulties. However it may be he has become a part and parcel of in India. He is proud of his Indian environment. He has made his commitment. India is his home and he will continue to live in his chosen home. He has kept his commitment by depicting life faithfully as he finds it in the city of Bombay. He has not shown any craze for visiting foreign countries. Instead his poetry has acted as mirror for reflecting life as it is actually lived in this backward place. He has written a number of poems on the life that goes on around him; Bombay is realistically and feelingly depicted in number of his poems.

As a child, Ezekiel was lean and thin. He went to Roman Catholic school and felt like a fish out of water among other students of different faiths. Thus he writes;

I went to Roman Catholic school,
A mugging Jew among wolves.
They told me I had killed the Christ….
That year I won the scripture prize.

A Muslim sport man boxed my ears. (HID, 11-13)

At school he was deeply disgusted with ‘undernourished Hindu lads’ who always repelled him. One day he fought with them with a knife. Then he tried to learn of Yoga and of Zen. But the more “I see searched, the less I found”. At twenty two he decided to go abroad and with the help of a friend he went to England. He studied philosophy and wrote poetry there. As the poet puts it:

Philosophy.
Poverty and poetry, three

Companions shared my basement room. (BC-181)

He stayed in London for two years and then returned to India in an English cargo–ship. He got married and changed jobs. Ezekiel has tried to go back to his roots in the following to go back to his roots in the following lines;

The song of my experience sung
I knew that all was yet to sing
my ancestors among the castes
were aliens crushing seed for breed
(The hooded bullock made his rounds) (BC-181)

When the poet realized that going back to his ancestors would be difficult for him, he decided to identify with modern India. Identifying with the typography of the country and contemporary society would not be difficult. Thus, came to the resolution;

The Indian landscape sears my eyes
I have become a part of it
to be observed by foreigners (BC-181)

Ezekiel has reacted the various ways in various poems to his experience of alienation. One way has been his assumption of an attitude of superiority and snobbery towards the Indian conditions of life. ‘The Very Indian Poems in Indian English’ is an outstanding example of this attitude. The characters, who speak in these and similar poems, are an Indian patriot a retired professor, and the office–bearer of a college teachers’ association in the poems ‘The Patriot’, ‘The Professor’, and ‘Good Bye Party for Miss Pasha T.S.’ respectively.

Another poem, ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S’, it is an excellent example of alienation attitude of Nissim Ezekiel. The occasion is Miss Pushpa “is departing for foreign”. The rambling style typical of such speeches is telling employed; all logic is taken leave of, and typical Indian thought processes are expressed:

Miss Pushpa is coming
From father was renowned advocate
In Balsar or Surat,
I am not remembering now which place.
Surat? Ah, Yes,
Once only I stayed in Surat
With family members
Of my uncle’s very old friend. (CP-190)

The shakiness about the father’s exact place is subtle pointer to the insincerity of the speaker. After having rambled a good deal the poor fellow suddenly comes to the relevant subject and informs the audience that Miss Pushpa “is going to foreign to improve her prospect”;

You are all knowing, friends,
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa
I don’t mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness.
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
Even for no reason
But simply because she is feeling. (CP. 190)

Typically Indian in its laxity and shallowness the entire poem is a biting satirical comment on the way we speak and respond to various situations. In his simplistic Ignorance the fellow hardly knows whether he is complimentary or critical to poor Miss Pushpa. ‘The Railway Clerk’ is also an example of alienation. The railway clerk is ignorant about railway prospect and time table of arrival train and departure train. He is unaware of social condition and social problem. The railway clerk always complaints about facilities in the office. He is also not aware about the working conditions, the atmosphere and the circumstances are so disheartening and dampening that nobody would like and trey to work: a small desk, an unrepaired fan “For two months, three mouths”, the daily struggle of communicating between the dwelling and the desk the suburb and the city children plying truants and wife’s mother being confines to bed and this poor fellow
being the only support; a veritable latter day Arjuna; In this poem Nissim Ezekiel only describes government officers and officials.

It is not only Ezekiel’s mockery of the misuse of the English language by the average Indian, which shows Ezekiel’s alienation from the society and the environment in which he has spent most of life in Bombay. His alienation appears also in the way he has depicted the conditions of life in this country. There are the smart fellows who fleece the superstitious villagers ‘Rural Suite’; there is the Guru who totally lacks all the virtues of saint in the poem of the same name in which Ezekiel asks;

If saints are like this

what hope is there then for us?(CP-191)

Then there are the students whose idea of social service is limited to getting themselves photographed while distributing biscuits among the flood affected villagers in the poem “The truth about the floods”. There is the highly sexed Muslim girl more interested in the “pictures in a certain kind of book” than in her English lessons in the poem “How the English lessons Ended”. There is the prostitute on Bellasis Road on whom the poet’s final comment is: “I cannot even say I care or do not care/ perhaps it is a kind of despair”. There is the maid –servant, in the poem ‘Ganga’ loses morals, who is treated by her employers of the typical middle –class in a condescending and patronizing manner indicative of their sense of superiority. Then there are the flirtatious Indian husbands and their shy wives at an international party in the poem ‘In Indian’. There is the intellectual Indian a girl whose great expectations are suddenly frustrated when she finds her relationship with her England Boss finally reduced to level of the man –woman connection in the poem. There is the foreign visitor who does not know that “beggars” in India smile only at white foreigners. In the poem entitled ‘Poverty Poem’. In all these poems, Ezekiel’s mockery clearly implies his dislike of the behavior and the habits of the Indian people and his alienation from them. And his alienation even from his own Jewish community appears clearly in the poem ‘Jewish wedding in Bombay’ in which Ezekiel views ironically the emptiness of the Jewish ritual and the orthodoxy, and in which he also emphasizes the disillusionment which marriage and the sexual relationship bring.

3.2.4. The study of Love, Sex and Man-Woman Relationship
Nissim Ezekiel is known as love poet. His love poems are mostly concerned with physical, sexual relationship between man and woman. The themes of such poems are sensuality and lust, and not true love or love which has its basis in the heart and the emotions. In the middle of the twentieth century, new type of poetry developed in the hands of a few American poets like Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, Anne sexton, John Berryman and others. It was termed as confessional poetry. The great English poets, like Eliot and Pound, also practiced “confessional” poetry. But they differed from their American counterparts in that they were cleanly objective instead of being purely subjective. Rakha says that “Nissim Ezekiel treated man-woman relationship in frank and sincere manner. The theme of love and sex obsessed his mind and found expression in his early poetry.”

Nissim Ezekiel treated man–woman relationship in the frank and sincere manner. The theme of love and sex obsessed his mind and found expression in his early poetry. As K.R.S. Iyengar says, “He was painfully and poignantly aware of the flesh, its insistent urges, its stark ecstasies its disturbing filiations with the mind.”

A great deal of the poems from Nissim Ezekiel’s first book–‘A Time to Change’ (1952), a few of the poems from *Sixty Poems* (1953) and a very few of *The Third* (1959) May be regarded as confessional, because in them he treated the physical dimensions of the relationship between man and woman freely.

The poem, ‘A Time to Change’ reflects his personal experience. The theme of love and sex dominates these collections. As a poet was in his full – blooded youth, his mind was obsessed with the idea of love and sex, especially in his lonely hours. For example, in ‘And God Revealed’, the word ‘love’ is repeated quite frequently in the first stanza and intermittently in the rest of stanzas. Moreover, the poet has himself confessed that “there is a frequent focusing on and preoccupation with a ‘Pagam’ woman in my poetry.” The pagan woman symbolizes the fleshy existence of sexual vibrancy and emotional intensity in the heart and soul of the poet. The first section describes man’s departure from home. It seeks to point out that although mind is the source of everything, yet we are the slaves of the nightmare of sex and the ego. The protagonist finds out that our redemptions possible only if our guiltier revealed and laid thread bare. The second section describes the protagonist’s Frustration and his search for identity. There is a
strong assertion that redemption can be sought only in life itself and not beyond it. It is for this reason that the protagonist seeks consolation in love and poetry:

So, in our style of verse and life
The oldest idiom may reveal
A smile never seen, limbs retain
A virginal veracity and every stone
Be as original as when the world was made. (CP-5)

The third section explains the desired pattern of future life. The fulfillment in life is possible through human relationship and marital bliss. In the fourth section, Ezekiel says that he builds up his poetry out of dreams and abstract material. In the final section of the title poems, the poet tries to seek his identity. But his “deep affection for the world” takes him to the other extreme. Thus, ‘A Time to Change’ depicts Ezekiel’s confession of love and sex, his frustration for not achieving his objective and his sensuous efforts to seek his identity. So Ezekiel’s poems entitled, ‘A Time to Change’ is dominated by the ideals of love and sex. As Mohanty says “In poem after poem, Ezekiel celebrates body, defines the physical world, immortalizes the flesh.”

He has portrayed a wide range of interests in the need of physical passion and its fulfillment. His inclusion of the lower animals in the activities of love and sex entitle him a higher place in the animals of the poets of love and physical passion above all, Ezekiel’s frank confession of love and sex in his early poems associates him with Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath on the one hand and Kamala Das, Shiv. K. Kumar and Jayant Mahapatra on the other hand. To Nissim Ezekiel who is considered the pioneer of modernism in Indian English poetry, man – woman relationship is hinged entirely on physicality. Linda Hess says that he is out and out “a poet of the Body.”

His poetry is replete with several sumptuous descriptions of female body and love making. But his descriptions are bare and blunt and do not evoke emotion. At places, in an effort to create a work of erotic appeal, he even slips into the obscene. However, he finds himself still inhibited in comparison with his “poetic ancestors”, the Sanskrit eroticists, as he reveals in ‘Passion Poems’:

How freely they mention
breasts and buttocks

They are my poetic ancestors.

why am I so in habited? (CP-214)

Ezekiel perhaps forgets that mere mentioning of “breast and buttocks” does not qualify the poem for the canon of erotica. The term “erotic is a derivative of Eros, is the god of love in Greek mythology. It is known as Roman love god cupid and the Hindu god Kamadeva, therefore, involve both the psychological and spiritual aspects of love along with the corporeal. In so far as the niceties of amatory content and the spiritual dimension of love are lacking in Ezekiel’s poems, he fails to come up to the standards of the Sanskrit eroticists. Ezekiel’s poems suffer from the bane of trite, obvious, obscene and crude expression of sexuality. For instance, in the except below from his ‘Nudes 1978, 2’

    I love undressing, she has to say,
    As she undress. The verbal
    And the visual join in her.
    Is this a part of you?she asks,
    As she holds it, stares at it
    The she laughs -----
    ……..Put your lingers there
    She pleads as if
    I need instructions. It’s only
    Impatience, though, becoming Frenzy
    As I penetrate. ‘Now’, she claims,
    You are within me. Aren’t you
    Within me? And she makes me say, ‘I am’. (PDP. 32)
The description perceptibly lacks in the poetic as well as the erotic. It bespeaks of only the poet’s hedonist, self-indulgent and woman feelings. As also, in the excerpt below from the post – coital banter between the loves makers in ‘Nudes -1978. 3’

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, is though you are hardly
my cup of tea. (Ibid-33)

The encounter between the man and the woman is purely physical, merely deriving pleasure from each other’s body without having any lasting emotion or deeper understanding or admiration for the individual.

The Nude means pictures or images or shapes which are absolutely bare or naked, without any kind of covering or garment upon them. The poem, which appeared in that volume, show Nissim Ezekiel’s boldness in dealing with a theme or themes which are somewhat dedicate to handle. Ezekiel here shows a certain amount of courage in depicting frankly, and without any sense of shame, the nudity of women and desires which nudity arouses in men and in the women themselves. Of course, these poems are meant only for adults; and it may confidently be asserted that every reader would respond to these poems whole heartedly because he would find his own impulses and urges echoed or confirmed here.

Here we have a more or less explicit, though brief, description of sexual intercourse. The woman likes undressing, and therefore, readily and quickly undresses herself. Then, without wasting a moment, she takes hold of the man’s sexual organ and, looking at it, asks him if this organ is really a part of his body. Then she laughs and urges him to use his finger. In fact, she has become impatient and would like the man to hurry up because of the urgency of here need. The man does not require any incentive because he is himself impatient to perform the sexual
act. When he has penetrated her, she asks if he had made an entry in to her; and he has to answer in the affirmative.

There is nothing remarkable about this poem which merely depicted a woman’s desire to be fondled and caressed before the man commences the sexual act the woman had, when she asks him when he had written it, his answer is somewhat vigor, but this answer suggests the sexual intercourse. Then, without being asked to do so, the woman uncovers her small breast to fondle by him, when he begins to fondle her breast she smiles and then asks him the meaning of what he had then asks him the meaning of what he had said. On his explaining what he had meant, she says that she likes it. Then, without being asked to do anything she once again takes the initiative and reveals her breasts to him fully, wanting him to caress them.

Another poem, ‘Background, Casually’ this poem like, the preceding to appear in Ezekiel’s sixth volume of poems which was published in 1976 under the heading of *Hymns in Darkness*. But it differs from the preceding two poems not only in its theme but in its tone and atmosphere. In ‘Background, Casually’ we find a vein of irony through the poem though there is an element of seriousness in it also ‘Poem of the Separation’ is a love poem which is predominantly touching and poignant though there certainly is a touch of humor or irony. The subject of this poem is a love affair between the speaker and a woman with whom he had fallen in love on meeting her suddenly one day, and who too seemed to have fallen in love with him. The speaker is now meditating upon that love affair which had not lasted very long because the woman had gone away from him and, although she has been writing letters to him. She has no intention to come back to him. In her latest letter she has informed him that she would like to play with fire and get burnt if necessary. Ezekiel has here written a spicy poem which has its humorous sides though there is a touch of poignancy to it also. The love-affair was a tumultuous one. In his poem, the lover remains undisturbed by the bursting to bombs in Kashmir as he says to his beloved:

To judge by memory alone

Our love was happy

When the bombs burst in Kashmir;

My life had hurts
and merged in yours

The war did not matter

Though we tried to care,

The season, time and place

Rejected their usual names. (JSAL –X -3-4-P-111)

This is the state in which the lover and the beloved care for nothing but each other. I had started suddenly at a time when bombs had started exploding in Kashmir as a consequence of the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan. It was certainly a passionate affair because the speaker had become so absorbed is each other that nothing else, not even the war, mattered to them. And yet, while depicting the intensity of his passion and the woman’s passion too, Ezekiel does not lose sight of the ordinary realities of life. Using two remarkable metaphors, he writes that man may be “whirlwind” and woman may be “lighting”, they yet to be carried to their place of appointment by a bus or a rain. The speaker and his sweet –heart had been meeting in cafes, on the seashore, and on benches in park; and there they had enjoyed the delicious pleasure of exchanging caresses and kisses which seemed like music to them.

They came to the separation, because the woman wanted to hear another kind of music, meaning that she wanted to find another lover and to explore new territories. The speaker’s regret at this development is obvious. He calls the fact that, in this squalid and crude city where he was born, the woman represented a new way of laughing at the truth of things. Now he certainly wants her back in order to share with her the kind of light – hearted happiness which she felt and which she showed in the expression of her face. And the speaker hear makes a passing allusion to her shoulders, breast, and things, thus imparting sensuous or sensual touch to his account of the affair. At last, the woman would like to terminate the entire relationship between herself and the speaker. She has belt influenced by a couple of lines in a religious poem translated from the original Kannada by the poet Ramanujan into English; and she is felling inclined to play with fire even if she gets burnt.

The ending of ‘Poem of the Separation’ is somewhat cryptic. The ending comes, of course, in the final stanza. The whole account of the love- affair, as given to us the speaker in the poem, is perfectly lucid and clear; but the ending puzzles us somewhat because of its ambiguity.
The speaker in the poem recalls the commencement of the love-affair and the joy which it had brought both to him and his sweetheart. The love affair had begun at the very time when the bombs had started bursting in Kashmir as a consequence of the outbreak of a war between the Pakistan and the India Forces. The speaker in the poem had really fallen in love with the woman, and had got the feeling that his life had merged with the woman’s life, and that the war did not matter to either of them. The love affair had been a passionate, and almost tumultuous, affair, with the man behaving like a whirlwind and the woman showing the intensity and the rapidity of lighting in her passion. They had exchanged eagerness and kisses everywhere, but soon afterwards the woman had ceased to feel much interest in the man. The change in her attitude had taken place because the woman had felt attracted by another man, and she had then gone away to a place ten thousand miles away from her first lover. She had certainly been writing letters to him, but she no longer loved him. As for the man, he had not ceased to love her, and even now he remembers of life. The man wants her back and he wants her in the same happy mood in which she used to be in the past. He wants her back supported by her shoulders, breasts, and things as she used to be in the past.

‘Two Nights of Love’ is also sexual poem. This poem appeared in Nissim Ezekiel’s second volume of poems which was published in 1953, under the heading of *Sixty Poems*. The poet speaks of his experience of love-making on two successive nights after his first night of love-making, he merely dreams of love, having found a release from the woman’s thighs and breasts. He had wanted to become a prisoner in the woman’s arms, and had then wanted to have a sense of freedom. On the second night, he again makes love to the woman and experiences the strokes which the woman administers him, using her thighs, and, he experiences the pleasurable contact with her breasts which seem to be singing a song to him when the sexual act is over, he has a feeling of exhaustion, though he wished to perform the act once again. He finds himself a slave to his desire and yet he also experiences a sense of being a free man.

The poet imparts a holy quality to a sensual experience by invoking the name of god, and saying that he wanted the kind of freedom which is as fresh as the name of God, and which is as ancient as the earth. God’s, name has been ignored or denied through all the centuries and yet it has remained fresh and inspiring to the believers. And, loveliness, as experienced by a passionate man in darkened room, has never lost its appeal. It is with great pleasure that a woman bears the weight of a man when he performs the sexual act with her.
The poet has used the combination of the spiritual and sensual, of the secular the religious, of the earthy and the heavenly. It is a poem pregnant with meaning. It is poem the dualism of which is very interesting and intriguing. It awakens our and at the same time, it stimulates our spiritual instincts, thus creating what may be described as a pleasurable blend of contrary feelings.

Some other poems carrying descriptions of female body in stark nakedness are ‘Description’, ‘Gallantry’, ‘Motives’, ‘Haiku’ and ‘Beachscene’. The following excerpt from the poem ‘Description’ clearly manifests the poet’s fondness for a woman’s nudity;

I will begin – but now 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.
And I will close – but is this fair?
With dawn and you
Reluctantly
Binding up your hair [CP. 48]

The persona’s gaze is essentially the “male gaze” who sees woman merely as a body, a desirable body, an object of sex, and nothing more. Nor is there any desire expressed to relate to her as person. A purpose of female, Ezekiel’s point of view is unreservedly chauvinistic, and somewhat eccentric. Linda Hess He considers “female as essentially a sex object to be enjoyed by the male. Woman has been created for the pleasure and physical gratification of man just as trees, waves,
birds, buildings, stones, steam, rollers, cats and clocks [Ibid-p-96] are the various commodities for mortals.”

In some of his poems, he identifies her as the ‘female animal; which is certainly a disparaging remark for the womankind. For instance, in “love poem”, he calls woman a ‘beast of sex’ and sees her as ‘myth and dream’. And as in the poem ‘Beachscene’;

“Image of a female
Body nearly naked
On the beach, and bird soft
But blazing animal
Unhinging speech and bone [CP. 137]

Similarly, poems like ‘Progress’, ‘Haiku’, ‘Three Women’, ‘Motive’, ‘In twenty –four Hours’, ‘In India’, ‘Nudes’, project woman as a seducer or a whore or a mere sex object. The poet sees only the carnal, sensual aspects of the female kind. He is too presumptuous about femininity and female sexuality. In the poem ‘On Giving Reasons’, he seems to be presupposing a woman’s “No” as an approval:

She gave me
Six good reasons
For saying No
And then
For no reason at all
Dropped all her reasons
with her clothes. [CP-215]

This is, without a shred of doubt, a vague, sweeping statement, taking woman for granted regardless of her inner feelings. There is no genuineness of emotion, no attempt to understand the female psyche, and expression. It is only the poet’s individual fetish. The poet seems to be seeking some sort of self – gratification out of his effusions on sex. At times, he can be seen indulged in fancying the act of love making among animals;
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 (Aside). (The third -9)

In the poem ‘The Behavior of love Birds’, he tends to satisfy his fetish by visualizing the act of sexual intercourse between a pair of animals:

The more the female fluffs,
The readier she is,

And the more the make is encouraged.

finally, she solicits copulation
By leaning forward,
Raising her head,
And her tail.

Newly formed pairs
are rather awkward.
The males make many mistakes,
Are frequently threatened
And thwarted
By their mates. [Ibid -31]

Ezekiel seems to be obsessed with sexual activity and he not only relates to the other in purely carnal manner but also keeps on imagining the copulation in the animal world between males
and females. Any communication at the level of mind, sensual or even simple companionship between men and women is missing in Ezekiel poetry. They just remain bodies apart which come together momentarily for sexual pleasure.

Nissim Ezekiel has a purely sensual way of loving. There are several of his poems that bespeak of his obsessive and somewhat delirious views about sex and female body. The poem ‘Motives’ very overtly elucidates an esthetics of life;

   My motives are sexual,
aesthetic and friendly
In that order, adding up
To bed with you.....
....Your things are full and around,
thin and flat
I’d love them too.

There go my aesthetics. [CP-154]

In ‘Conclusion’, he spells out his way of life, which is curtly epicurean and over– laden with sensuality:

   The true business of living is seeing.
   Touching, kissing,
The epic of walking the street and loving
in the bed. [CP -97]

The lover in the poem ‘Conclusion’ regards the activities associated with love as the true business of loving. This lover puts woman in the same category as trees, tables, waves, cats, birds, and buildings when he says;

   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, steamrollers,
Cats and clocks ….. [CP. 97]

In ‘The old Abyss’, a girl, once a wife and a mother but now alone, takes pleasure in tormenting men with “magnificence in movement” (Cp -48) which makes them see the old abyss.

‘Event’ is on woman who is uncertain of what is expected from her and in an effort to please her lover speaks of an unread book called “Wine and Bread”, a Film, a ‘Speech’ and ‘Art’
But;

Remote from the exploring act
I knew that both were undefined,
Who lived in day -dreams, not in fact,
Reflections of the cleaned mind.  [Cp-123]

In contrast to her, there is the woman of whom ‘Haiku’ says;

Unasked, as the day
declined, she brought out her small
breasts to be caressed. [CP -174]

‘Haiku’ itself is embedded in the tenth section of ‘Nudes -1978’, splendid gallery of nudes painted, albeit with the pen.

Nissim Ezekiel looks at women not merely as a lover looks at his beloved but also as a botanist looks at a flower. He says in ‘Motives’ referring to “your body”, I dwell on it;

As on a landscape
Or a beloved painting. [CP-154]

In poem after poem he tirelessly celebrates the female body but without the least desire to gloss over the unpleasant and the ugly:

Your skin is white
But black or grey
Would do just as well. [CP -154]

There is always a strong realism at work behind the celebration. In the tongue in-cheek ‘Gallantry’ the focus gradually moves from the face to the ankles of a woman’s body:

This is a face
A man may look upon;
Do I stare too long?
Well, then, I shall
Lower
The gaze
Your bosom likes me well.
Or let me be humble,
Taking in the thighs.
Forgive me, madam
Now I bend my eyes
Lower still
To fall upon your knees. How
Low shall I fall?
Down to your ankles then-
but now
It’s time to rise
And look again upon your face.
Do I stare too long?
Well, then I shall
Lower gaze …… [CP -105]
Occasionally, the male body is brought under observation, as in ‘Nakedness II’:

He stripped and lay down on his bed
And watched his naked limbs, remote
As love and lonely as a dream.

He wondered why his torso seemed
So unfamiliar and his thighs
As though they were not part of him.

Meager was the Flow of muscle
And the bone not bountiful
But all was soft and small and spare
And nothing quite his own but separate (CP - 60)

Interestingly, though one gains the impression that the speaker’s in some of his poems are no complete strangers to brothels, the Professional prostitute is conspicuous by her absence from Ezekiel’s poetry, thus offering a contrast to the work of Jayant Mahapatra into which whores walk quite freely. In ‘Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher’ Woman are called “myth of light” (CP-135).

The poet compared lover with poet himself and birdwatcher. They are thirsty about words, beloved and birds. They love passionately. In this poem, the poet rightly observes that best poets wait for words like an ornithologist sitting in silence by the flowing river or like a lover waiting for the beloved till she “no longer waits but risks surrounding”. The poem speaks of the usual patience that lovers and ornithology gifts possess. The bird-beloved-poem syndrome runs parallel throughout the poem. The poet is like the beloved in that, unless the body wakes to love or unless the spirit is moved, neither love nor poetry is possible. Here there is a remarkable fusion of rhythm and meaning. In order to watch the rare birds one has to go to remote place just as one has to discover lover in a remote place like the hearts dark floor. It is there that women are something more than body, and that they appear like myths of light. It is remarkable for its analysis of feminine psychology so far as love is concerned. A woman or at least a sensible woman does not begin to reciprocate a man’s love as soon as she finds that the man is Feeling drawn towards her. A sensible woman does not simply fall into the arms of a man who has
professed his love for her, and whose tone in processing his love is urgent, or pleading, or humble, or passion or pressing. She waits and, if the lover has enough patience and he would surely have patience if he is a true lover, the woman would at last surrender herself and her body to him, and at the time of here surrender she would not appear to be just an alluring and seductive figure but would seem to a myth of light. The myth of light means a radiant spirit and a product of the lovers Fancy rather than a woman of flesh and bone.

‘The Couple’ is also poem kind of poem which is appeared from volume called *Hymns in Darkness*. It may be regarded as one of the many love poems which Ezekiel has written. His treatment of love is concerned. Love can be genuine, love can be a mere presence, love may be emotional and spiritual, love may be physical or bodily, and thus take the form of mere lust, love may be everlasting, and soon in the poem before us. Nissim Ezekiel dwells upon love which is purely physical and of the body, both on the part of the woman and on the part of the man. In order to receive the fullest possible co–operation from the woman in his sexual intercourse with her, the man makes use of flattery, as men generally do. He calls her a wonderful woman, whereupon she laughs happily because her vanity has been tickled. Of course, says the author, the woman had heard this kind of praise from many men before, but that does not dampen her spirits and she does give him her fullest co –operation;

She did it pretty enough,

Demonstrating

With childlike glee

A trick or two [TC-44]

In fact, she performs her role in the sexual intercourse pretty enough and she even introduce some novelty in to it by means of a trick or two. Thus she is a seasoned woman, but this fact does not dampen the man’s desire for her. It is consciously and deliberately that he employs the devices of flattery and bold advances, because these are “the minimum politics of survival and success”. Both the man and the woman arm, in fact deceiving each other consciously and intentionally. The man does so in order to win the maximum possible response from the woman, while the woman does so because she does not wasn’t to disappoint the man who has gratified her vanity and her ego. At the end of the poem , the author tells us that the man would not have
loved such woman genuinely but that he could not, at the same time give her up altogether because he desperately and passionately wanted her to satisfy his physical urge and his bodily desire. The author describes the man love as a “charade of passion and possession”, meaning that it was just a case of deception on the part of the man who wanted to possess the woman in order to satisfy his passion, and it was a deception on the part of the woman also because she actually enjoyed the sexual intercourse even though she did not truly love the man.

‘A Woman Observed’, this short poem describes a pregnant woman whom the speaker in the poem observed when she was visiting an art gallery and staring at some nude paintings which had been hung on the walls to be exhibited to art lovers. The pregnant woman in this poem was a prude who felt somewhat shocked by the nudity of the woman painted in those pictures. Evidently she had strayed in to the art gallery without knowing that there would become nude painting on display, her reaction was therefore on display. Her reaction was therefore one of shock. But the poet’s reaction to the woman’s sense of shock was one of shame because he felt that a woman, who was pregnant, should have felt no dislike at all for a display of feminine nakedness. The poet was of the view that, having a baby in her womb, she should she should have realized that it was nakedness in bed with a man which had led to her pregnancy. The child in her womb would come into this world as a result of her own experience of nakedness resulting in her pregnancy Even now, as she stood wondering at the nude paintings before her, her body presented an erotic sight, and her movement along the wall had a sensual appeal which her dress could not hide.

‘Virginal’, the theme of this poem is the predicament of woman who has not got married throughout her life, and has grown old to become a spinster such a woman may feel happy enough but she is deceiving herself. If she thinks that her happiness is perfect or that she had adopted the right course in having denied to herself the pleasures of a married life and the pleasures of motherhood. The conscious and the sub – conscious feeling of a spinster are described in this poem through a man who is to be imagined as addressing the woman and telling her what the reality of the situation is she may pretend that she is quite happy in her life of loneliness, and that she did the right in having remained a virgin and not having married But the actual fact is that she has been feeling sad without showing her sadness, and that her life of loneliness had crushed her natural liveliness. In this poem, the speaker says that the spinster’s subconscious desire to marry and to give birth to a child had never really become extinct even
though she had never consciously been experiencing this desire and had never, at least, expressed it even if it ever became conscious. It is an extraordinary poem in so far as its theme is unusual and the technique employed by Ezekiel to convey to us the subconscious feeling of a spinster is also unusual. The theme is unusual because in India we do not have spinsters in this country girls are forced in to marriage at an early age by their parents, while in the west spinsterhood, and has become almost an institution, one reason for that being the dearth of eligible bachelors or widowers.

‘Marriage’ is the poem shows man woman relationship in married life. This poem appeared in the authors fourth volume of poems which was originally published in 1960 and subsequently in another edition, in 1965 under the heading of The Unfinished Man. As the title of the poem shows, it deals with the subject of marriage, with the ecstasies of marriage in the beginning, and with the disillusionment which marriage brings later in life to both a husband and his wife. There is nothing exceptional about the theme of this poem because every Marriage. Every married man has tasted the sweetness of his relationship with his wife, and he also knows the misery and the pain which it causes to both the partners in course of time because of the differences of opinion, the clashes of views, the misunderstanding which take place because of the relation and even because of the children about whom the husband of the children about whom the husband and the wife form different notions. However, the author in this poem does not go in to the causes in this poem does not go in the causes of disillusionment but merely points out the fact of disillusionment after drawing our attention to the initial raptures of the relationship between a husband and a wife. According to Raghukul Tilak, “Marriage is one of the finest of the love poems of Ezekiel.”

The poet has explored the various facts of love and marriage in his poems. The theme is always loved but there are variations, as in music. To the poet, love is the prime in source of inspiration and supreme joy of life, but it is followed by frustration and disillusionment. Romance is soon replaced by harsh reality, the woman no longer remains a Fairy but becomes a creature of flesh and blood; wish her own whim and caprices. The wife is different from the beloved and bridge. When a man and woman, who are in love with each other, get married, they feel that they would never be separated in life, and that they would experience the pleasures of their sexual relationship and genuinely enjoying their married life without interruption and forever. The poet himself has had an experience of the pleasures of married life. In fact, he had,
for some time after the marriage, felt so happy, and his wife too had felt so happy, that neither of
them could believe that they would ever cease to love each other. It had been impossible for them
even to believe that the act of sexual intercourse committed by “Adam and Eve in paradise lost”
could have offended God, so deeply as to lead to their expulsion from that place.

Anisur Rehman says about married life “the poet considers himself to be a modern Cain
who is doomed to wander and remain unsatisfied, and, even though the poet is tragically aware
of his fate, he chooses not to reveal it. He assumes a happy role before the world. He is a
frequent wedding quest and his choice of not being deprived of this position lies only too
superficial. the musical scheme of the lines rhyming together in a stanza of four lines relieves
the tension which the poet feels on account of the loss of love and failure in marriage Marital
failure is as much the theme of the poet as his other failures, experienced from time to time.” 25

However, the author subsequently found that his conjugal life with his wife was tending
to make him regret the marriage, and the same was his wife impression of their conjugal life.
Thus they now felt like the Biblical person, Cain, who murdered his brother Abel and who,
thereafter, spent many years of regret, repentance, and aimless wandering in a mood of
desolation. The spell of marriage had now been shattered for both the author and his wife. At the
end of the poem, the author says that he would not like to destroy the mystery of marriage by
dwelling upon its dark side and the suffering which marriage brigs in the long run for both the
husband and the wife. Having frequently attended the marriages of other people in response to
their invitations, he does not feel justified in criticizing or condemning marriage. The Fact, that
he has frequently attended other people marriages shout bond which marriage establishes
between a man and a woman.

The word ‘Grace’ has religious associations, but they touch eternity with grace conveys
the idea of endless joy following lines bring evocatively alive all the joys of the body. This
general view is applied to Ezekiel’s own case;

I went through this, believing all,
Out love denied the primal fall.
wordless, we walked among the tree
And Felt immortal as the breeze. [CP-123]
It was so absorbing at the beginning that the idea of man’s fall from grace seemed incredible. But Ezekiel does not ignore the realities of marriage. The initial excitement is followed by the feeding of satiation;

The same

ting over and over again.(CP-123)

The poem ‘The Way it Went’ is related to marriage life. This poem was published in Nissim Ezekiel’s collection of poems which appeared under the heading of ‘Poems’. He describes the experience of marriage at the age of twenty seven or so he had met a girl who subsequently became his wife. After the marriage they had gone for their happy, he had put his arms around her suddenly one day his wife became a mother, and then in quick succession afterwards she gave birth to more children with the result, that the poet found himself burdened with a whole family to support without much money in his pocket. He wondered how all this had happened. so he asked his wife how events had taken this turn, and she indifferently told him not to be funny because, after all, he was not so absent–minded a man as But the poet was not satisfied with this answer and asked himself who in heaven had played this trick on him –It seemed to him that he was asleep and dreaming, and so he urged himself to wake upward face the reality. The next thing true saw a wedding; it was the wedding of his eldest daughter. He shook himself to realize the situation and, shortly afterwards, he found a child on his lap, it was his eldest daughter’s child calling him grandpapa. All that he could now say was “O well, I’ll be damned”

In ‘Two Images’, the speaker says that he can be dragged out with the greatest ease;

by any fluttering fly

at the end of a hook [CP-143]

‘At the Party’ contains this magnificent apostrophe;

Ethereal beauties, may you always be
dedicate to love and reckless shopping,
your midriffs moist and your thighs unruly,
Breast beneath the Fabric slyly plopping. [CP-98]
No one is more keenly aware than Ezekiel that there are few states in life more wretched than that state of being unloved. Again ‘Virginal’ highlights the pain of loneliness in the absence of lover and child. At times, as in ‘Encounter’ his poetry seems to burn with the belief that it is better to have loved at all:

I knew that love is always right;
The might have been
Is worse than errors of the creed,
for in denying, still desires the indeed. [CP-100]

There are several poems in Ezekiel which triumphantly celebrate the happiness generated by love in ‘Tribute’ the speaker goes to see the lights at the invitation of a girl who knows the things to see, the shortest way to reach each place and above all, the irony an outing brings:

Remembering what she had done
Formed, I promised her a song.
who made me feels at home in crowds,
this girl, To whom the lights belong. [CP-62]

Another poem ‘Love Sonnet’ memorably presents the triumphant mood of lovers:

This cafe, on the hill, among the birds,
cloud house a passing cloud,
the city light
are coming on
you and I wait for words;
our love has formed like dew on summer nights. (CP.120)

However, to say that Ezekiel is unaware of the problems and the pins tat love generates is wrong ‘Situation’ presents a relationship, obviously extramarital, built on foundations of falsehood she lies to be with him, he has his stock of lies, the upshot of the meaning is nothing quit despair;

They left reluctantly but took with them despair.
A doze heads were turned on them with prying eyes.

He shook her hands, but wished to stroke her waiting hair.

and dragged his feet in going home to tell his lies. [CP-109]

Again in ‘Beachscene’ sweet sex is not wholly sweet even in a daydream. Love is essentially, says ‘Report’ a vast and extremely complex emotion:

And those who love are not,

As people think, happy

Because they love, but nearly

sad because the sea

Of passion is nothing precisely. [CP-84]

In some of his poems Ezekiel turns the spotlight on the blissful aspects of marital and domestic life. There are those famous lines in ‘A Time to Change’, which expresses the desire of the poet;

To own a singing voice and a talking voice,

A bite of land, a woman and a child or two. [CP-14]

Ezekiel is as aware of the less blissful aspects of domestic life as of the blissful when an affair takes its protagonists to the altar it is commonly looked upon as a successful one. But Ezekiel demonstrates in ‘To a Certain Lady’ that what appears, to begin with a success may ultimately turn out to be a failure at core. The first section of the poem is charged with the realization that the dancing moments of a kiss are real. In the third the triumph has begun to melt absences, quarrels and indifference have started sucking leech like upon the flesh of the penultimate section is reached the couple is overwhelmed by the problems of life, though of course, there is the consoling explanation that shouting is way of expressing love this development finds, to some extent, a parallel in the development from the first stanza to the second of “Robert Lowell’s man and wife”. In the former the speaker and his wife hold hands all night in bed, in the latter, twelve years later, she sleepless, turns her back on him holding her pillow to her hollows like a child. In the concluding section of ‘To a Certain Lady’ comes the philosophical realization;

Always we must be lovers,
Man and wife at work upon the hard
Mass of material which is the world.
Related all the time to one another and to life,
Not merely keeping house and paying bills
and being worried when the kids are ill. [CP -30]

A similar, though less serious, attempt to confront the same problem is made in ‘Song to be Shouted Out’ where the wife yells at the husband on his coming in the evening. The poem ‘Declaration’ Ezekiel Expresses the feelings of a lover who is bent upon possessing his beloved in such a state of mind his lover believes that “possession is necessary” and “deprivation is desolation” Nay, he flouts all rules all rules of morality as he says:

   No moral law can fill the void,
   Deaf and blind to all is appetite. [JSAL-XI -3-4, P-51]

In the poem in the ‘Queue’ he delineates the situation when tempting circumstances make one violate gentle manly manners and loses self-restraint;

   The sky is clear, the wind is mind,
   The world is as a little child
   But Adam in the busy street
   Is tempted to be indiscreet,
   Now savage red, now mildly pink,

   Are thought I cannot help but think… [JSAL –xi -3-4, p52]

The charge of sexism in Ezekiel’s poetry remains to be considered. Ezekiel’s poetry remains to be considered. Ezekiel is very fond of the company of woman and, in general, very good to them, especially the ones he likes and these are indeed quite a few. He is prepared to go to any lengths to help them, places absurdly long hours at their disposal, revises, polishes up and published their work smothers them with kindness generosity and love there certainly is some male Calvinism in his psychological makeup He sees women as women rather than as persons. Hence, it is only perhaps natural that a trace of sexism should be present in his work. However,
Raj Rao’s view that “I am unable to share that Ezekiel’s corpus is strongly exist –Ezekiel’s retort
to the allegation that it is so and I have heard it from his own lips.”

Another theme in this topic is man–woman relationship or life of woman, according to
A. K. Singh about it that “The picture of woman that emerges from his poem is a bleak and
negative one excepting a couple of poems. He sees her again and again as an object of sex, an
annoying truth and an invariably impending menace impending the personas moral voyage. She
appears as a femme fatale, an agent of corporeal corruption, sensuality defilement and nasty
passion and so in a way as an inferior being in human attribute of all sorts.”

Numbers of characters of women are sketched by Nissim Ezekiel in his poetry, one of the
women character in the poem ‘Night of the Scorpion’ is the speaker mother. First we find her
“twisting through and through, groaning on a mat” [LDP-P. 49]. But when she gets relief she
says “Thank God the scorpion picked on me and spared my children [LDP-P50]. This mother
instinctively loves her children and is relieved to find that the scorpion did not sting any of her
children but picked on her instead, with the result that none of her children had to bear the pain
she had born like the conventional mother she likes her children to be happy and gay and will
gladly undergo pain to project them. Also we have other woman (mother ) character in Jewish
wedding in Bombay , she is the bride’s mother and sheds “a tear or two” because there exists a
tradition of the kind, but actually she is very happy at her daughters marriage, as the poet
reports.

Her mother shed a tear or two but was really

Crying. It was the thing to do, so she did it,

enjoying every moment. [LDP-P-18]

This mother is different from the mother in ‘Night of the Scorpion’ as she pretends to cry
though actually she is happy at her daughter getting her husband. Her shedding tears signify her
observing one of the formalities of her community. Woman figures in Ezekiel’s poems as a wife
too. The Indian wives in the 3rd section of the poem, In India, are different from the wives from
the other five countries represented in the party arranged to celebrate the years end. The Indian
wives neither drink, nor talk, nor kiss, as the poet reports;

The wives of India sit apart
They do not drink

They do not talk

Of course they do not kiss [LDP –P. 51]

But in many poems we find a wide nagging her husband the bride in ‘Jewish Wedding in Bombay’ Starts nagging her husband in the synagogue itself when on his sympathizing with her crying mother she laughs and asks him no to “be silly” [LDP -P 18]. In the poem ‘Song to Be Shouted out’ the wife expects her husband to have his done dozens of things for her besides his professional work and she asks him whether he has posted the letter, made, that telephone call “paid that bill banked” that cheer “bought”. “Those tickets” [LDP –P27] with the result that the husband accepts his defeat and declares that wives exist only to shout at when he says;

Shout at me, woman!

Pull me for this and that,

You’re right and I’m wrong

Shout at me woman!

What else are wives for? [LDP-P-27]

This wife nags so much that the husband has turned a cynic and finds nothing pleasing in her. In ‘To a Certain Lady’, the lady nags the lover when the latter is nothing willing to agree to her buying an expensive lipstick and lady nagging leads him to say;

Lady doesn’t nag.

If you want that expensive lipstick

buy it for God’s sake not me-

I mean, really, why should I approve of it?

And that goes for dresses, hates, shoes,

slips, knickers, and brassies.

so long as they’re not on the installment plan.[JSAL XI 3-4, P-22]
Thus in Ezekiel’s poem the wives are gene rally very demanding and the husbands find it
difficult to satisfy. In some cases they demand too many expensive sensible articles and in some
cases too much work tries the husband. The wives in Ezekiel’s poems are not as modest as Indian
wives are believed to be. They are candid enough to communicate their husband their physical
needs and to reveal their husband their physical needs and to reveal their feeling in candid terms
if they are not happy with their husbands. For instance, the newly married wife in the poem
‘Jewish wedding in Bombay’ invites her husband in candid terms when the two are on a floor
mattress. However; she takes ten years to reveal to him her disappointment, as the persona
reports:

More than ten years passed before she told me that
She remembered being very disappointed. Is that all?
There is to it? She had wondered. [LDP–P19]

The three women in the poem ‘Three Women’ offer not only food but also love and the poet
says;

They spoke the language
Of food and love
Naturally
As a mother-tongue
No problem here
Of the accent or of intonation. [JSAL–XI 3-4-P89]

Asha Biswas regards about Ezekiel’s poetry “Ezekiel as a poet of the female body”, as she says
in her article Women in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel “Ezekiel remains a poet of the female body
passion poems are influenced by Sanskrit love poetry, in almost all his anthologies the poet is
aware of the female boy. He has a penchant evoked by her body.” 28

So, women in Nissim Ezekiel’s poetry are too picturesque and colorful and heartening for
the readers. He uses many images of women in his poetry. He uses sexual relationship between
men and women.
3.3. TECHNIQUES AND STYLES OF THE POETRY

Style has traditionally been denied as the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse as how speakers or writers say whatever it is that they say. The style specific to particular work to writer, or else distinctive of a type of writing, has been analyzed in such terms as the rhetorical situation and aim; characteristic diction, or choice of words; type of sentence structure and syntax; and the density and kinds of figurative language.

The poets under study have made skill in the use of language and creative expression, characterized by variations in versification, Imagery, symbolism and use of other poetic devices. The study focuses on the texture and the verbal experiments of the poets. It studies various linguistic, phonetic, lexical and semantic features of poetry, which include – Imagery, symbolism and use of figures of speech and rhetoric such as simile, metaphor, allusion, allegory, irony, paradox, parallelism and contrast; the choice and arrangement of specific words, phrases and sentences such as poeticism, colloquialisms, neologisms and solecisms; and the employment of rhythmic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and repetition.

Most of the Indian poets writing in English in the post-independence era stick to no specific form or genre of poetry. Each one of the poets under study adopts his/her own form, Structure and syntactic patterns and reveal variations in visual shape, size, movement, sentence structure and line – arrangement in their poems. Nissim Ezekiel, the harbinger of modernism in Indian English poetry, shows great ingenuity and variety in structuring his poems. The poetic form ranges from prose poem to verse libre to lyric. His prose poems are very few in number written in the early period. The poems have irregular structure. The poems may contain paragraphs, ranging between one and more than one. The syntactic formations also vary in length and arrangement, the short and long sentences alternate with one another depending upon the kind of effect to be produced.

3.3.1. Rhymes and Rhythms

The better part of Ezekiel’s poetic oeuvre is in verse libre. This new Form defies the classical verse forms and prosodies, encourages natural speech rhythms and liberates the rigid
patterns of stanza and line length to large extent. It lays emphasis on the consistent and coherent development of them.

In his early days, Ezekiel wrote mostly under the influence of poets like W B Yeats and T S Eliot. The Former can be seen echoed in his formal, rhymed metric verse, while the latter in his verse libre. However, gradually he developed greater regularity and skill in form, progression, sequence, rhyme, stanza and syntax. Some of the well-crafted poems of his early period include ‘Enterprise’, ‘Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher’, ‘Urban’, ‘Philosophy’, ‘Morning Prayer’, ‘Night of the Scorpion’ and ‘Case, Study’. The poem ‘Enterprise’ has a direct opening, and a dynamic linear movement leading to a climatic stage in this poem. There are lines from the poems which show rhyming song:

…When we
……Lost our way
A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group……
Some were broken, some merely bent….
we hardly knew why we were there,
Home is where we have together our
Grace. [R.Parthasarathy. E. 30]

In collected poems, the poet has replaced the word ‘gather’ with ‘earn our’–probably, to emphasis the point that even obligations at home are no less than a pilgrimage. Thus, the pilgrimage that started with “Exalting minds and making all the burdens light….”, ends on a note of doubt, “we hardly knew why we were there”, and a realization that “our deeds were neither great not rare”, and a resolution that “Home” is where we have to gather grace. It is noteworthy that there is marked descent in progression; hence the pace gradually slows down to a final stop in concluding line. The poem has a regular rhyme scheme ab ab a through all the almost-evenly structured stanzas, without much variation in line length;

It started as a pilgrimage
Exalting minds and making all
The burdens light. The second stage
Explore but did not test the chill.
The sun beat down to match our rage. [R.Parthasarathy. E. 30]

‘Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher’ is another well-structured poem into regular stanzas having the rhyme patter ‘abbaacdcdd’ in each of them.

To Force the pace and never to be still
Is not the way of those who study birds
or women. The best poets wait for words.
The hunt is not an exercise of will
But patient love relaxing on a hill
To note the movement of a timid wing;
Until the one who knows that she is loved
No longer waits but risks surrendering-
In this the poet finds his moral proved
Who never spoke before his spirit moved. [R.Parthasarathy.33]

There are some poems which show lyrical qualities, as ‘The visitor’ and ‘The Poem of Separation’. ‘The Visitor’, published in The Exact Name is a short simple lyric, and it demonstrates once again Ezekiel is conscious of the ordinariness of most events, and yet. How he can transmute and transform them, make poetry out of them, and bring out their essential significance. The lyric also brings out of poet’s gift of verbal portraiture, and how with a few deft touches he can bring a character to life. Thus lyric illustrates that the ordinariness of most events is theme of Ezekiel’s poetry. Though its illustrations are countless and most varied. The lyric is written in six-line stanzas but with no rhyme.

Another poem, ‘The Poem of the Separation’, Ezekiel writes in a style which compels us to share the experience which he has described in this poem. It is not just a poem of separation; it is a poem of union followed by a separation. The union is, of course, a purely physical one and not a meeting of the hearts, though the speaker did feel in the beginning that it was a deeply
emotional affair, not merely a physical one. In the beginning he had felt as if his being had merged with the woman’s being. Sharing the speaker’s experience of the union and the separation, we experience a vicarious pleasure and vicarious regret; and, after completing our reading of this poem, we brood over it for a while. It is reflective, meditative poem with a lyrical quality about it; and it certainly has an appeal for us and makes an emotional impact upon us.

3.3.2. Imaginative and Suggestive Style

Nissim Ezekiel is perfectly aware of the significance of suggestiveness in poetry and he feels that the imaginative faculty should be allowed to play its role. At the same time he always eager to celebrate the “ordinariness” of most event; and his characteristic mode remains simple, colloquial poetry of statements. Even when he becomes suggestive, he does so through a statement. He feels certain that the exact name can be found only in simplicity.

Poetry, according to Ezekiel, is not a gift to be adorned but a craft to be studied industriously. In the context of some of his poems which he described as ‘Poster Poems’, he said that he had purposely chosen to take the risk of complexity, compression, and stylistic freewheeling. This stylistic freewheeling is characteristic of almost all his poems. If he has used highly expressive and telling phraseology in his poems. He has also in his poems, he has also lapsed, as already pointed out above, in to abstract phrases like “Myth of light” and “sleep–walking on the air of thought”. He has also shown a tendency to use concentrated phrases which are metaphorical and which enact the central burden of a poem very clearly. In one of his poems, he uses the phrase, “jungle growth” to convey the tremendous expansion of the modern corrupt world. In another poem he uses the phrase “geometry of love” with reference to the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. In another poem, he speaks of “the epic of walking in the street”. The use of the words “Jungle”, “geometry”, and “epic” here is highly suggestive. In some of his earlier poems he has used such phrases as “Parable of hell” and “perennial dawn”. In one of his love–poems he uses the phrases, “The threshing thighs”, “the singing breasts” with reference to the sexual act; and in another such poem he writes; and “breasts, thighs, buttocks/swinging/ now towards/now away from him. So, it is said that Ezekiel is too erotic in use of language.
3.3.3. Language and Diction

Nissim Ezekiel has a high conception of his chosen calling and has thought long and deep over its various aspects, difficulties and problems. In his considered view, poetry is not a matter of inspiration alone good poetry is the result of painstaking efforts on the part of the poet. The best poets wait patiently for words, and they write only at the right moment when the right words come to them. S T Coleridge defined “poetry as the use of right words at the right place” and this definition clearly brings out Ezekiel’s own practice. He is painstaking artist who tries to use the best possible word for his purposes. Pursued with sincerity and devotion, art can be elevated to such remedial heights when “Deaf can hear, the blind recover sight”. Words are carefully chosen both with reference to their sense and their sound. All superfluity is avoided and terseness and consideration achieved. The result is that many of his lines are aphoristic, epigrammatic, and are easily remembered. The best poet fresh as brides are only a few instances of such condensed statements chosen are random. Ezekiel is economical in his use of language, but he uses never obscure. Clarity is the virtue which he prize above all else, and consideration never is at the cost of clarity.

Simplicity in language and diction characterizes Ezekiel’s poetry. They use of archaic absolute, out of the way and grandiloquent words is carefully avoided. Even philosophical and the logical subjects are dealt with simplicity and clarity. For him communicative efficacy is the test of great poetry. Ezekiel has criticized the heavy vocabulary and eschewed the grandiloquence characteristic of the type of poetry. Ezekiel has stressed the importance of the contemporary idiom “you cannot write good poetry; he said, “In a language which is not alive”. He is aware of the nature of words, their contemporaneity, their meaning, phonetic associations and inner potency. Various words put together in the scheme of a poem create a pattern of music and rehearse the rhythm or real experience. He strongly affirms that only the modern idiom can stand the tough critical taste an idiom which is the product of the much talked about interaction between prose and verse. Tone, vocabulary, diction, sound all need precision in a poem, says Ezekiel, if the form as a whole is to be strong and not an approximation of some casual sense of it in the poet. More and more he has tended to use a casual way of utterance and contemporary words, idioms and phrases.
Nissim Ezekiel is not an innovator or an experimenter with language. He uses words from the common, everyday vocabulary, but by his using imparts to them a new meaning and new emotive significance, simple words are turned into metaphors images and symbols according to need. Even seemingly prosaic words acquire poetic, overtones from the context in which they are used and recreation. Ezekiel stresses the rights of the poet to impart new significance to words, to re-form them.

English is foreign because it is not an Indian language, but Ezekiel uses it like a Lord and Master. It may also be noted that he could not have written in any other language, for his knowledge of Marathi was an indifferent one, and he had no knowledge of Hebrew at all. He tends more and more to use conversational idiom and language and thus capture the flavor of day to day Indian speech which is also indicative of the Indian thought processes. Of the countless Indian poets writing in English, he is the one who best represents the national identity, and who best expresses the national identity, and who best expresses the national aspirations and culture. It is aware achievement indeed, and it entitles him to the rank of the greatest Indian poet writing in English.

In the poem ‘Philosophy’, there is language, says the poet, which is not the language of philosophy or science. This is the language of the sense; and this language is employed in the writing of poetry to deal with those matters which are beyond the scope of philosophy and science. Poetry deals with common things and the treatment of common things by poetry shows the ineffectiveness of philosophy and science to deal with this matter. As compared with the method of poetry, the methods employed by philosophy and science are liked dead bodies which are in no way helpful in throwing light on the mysteries puzzling mankind, philosophy and science adopt the methods of logic and reasoning which are unemotional, while poetry employs the vibrant method of and emotional treatment of common things which are the real substance and fabric of poetry.

The poem ‘Good bye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’ is satire on the way most Indians speak or write the English language. Nissim Ezekiel is himself, of course, master of this language, having an unusual command over it; and in this poem he is poking fun at the way the Indians speak this language. This poem is thus a parody of the Indian way of speaking English though Nissim Ezekiel certainly knows that there are many Indians who speak and write much better
English than the average English man. Ezekiel has no ill-will against the Indians who speak wrong English; he here merely points out the kinds of errors which they commit, his object being only to make his laugh. Most Indians, while speaking English commit errors of tense, of syntax, and of idiom. For instance, they use the present continuous tense when only the present tense is required and they use present continuous tense when the future tense is required. An example of this sort of thing occurs in the very first stanza of this poem; “our dear sister is departing for foreign in two three days”. The correct form here would be: “our dear sister will be departing for a foreign in two three days”.

In the poem ‘Railway Clerk’, used grammatical errors. He used also present continuous tense instead of simple present tense for instance the railway clerk says:

I am never neglecting my responsibly,
I am discharging it properly.
I am doing my duty,
But who is appreciating?
Nobody, I am telling you.

The correct form of all these lines would be as follows;

I never neglect my responsibility,
I discharge it properly,
I do my duty,
But who appreciates?
Nobody, I tell you. (TRC- 184)

3.3.4. A Sophisticated Style

Ezekiel’s style or technique is not so sophisticated, after all. “Sophisticated” does not mean the same thing as simple, direct, and colloquial. Sophisticated means complex, subtle, involved, and having deeper layer of meanings. But, certainly, Ezekiel’s few of the poems are written in a “sophisticated” style. Examples are ‘Enterprise’, ‘Philosophy’ and ‘The Visitor’, but his poems in the direct and simple style out numbers them. Thus we may conclude that he shows
an equal command over both these styles and that in some poems he even mixes up the two styles. According to Chetan Karnani “Philosophy was Ezekiel’s companion”. He had already written that in London, philosophy, poverty and poetry, three companions, shared his basement room. But here, his love of metaphysics and logic is stated explicitly.”

There is a place, to which I often go,
Not by planning to, but by a flow
Away from all existence, to a cold
Lucidity……. (Classic P.S. 10)

He loves the cold lucidity of logic. He does believe in science and ruthless logic but there are words greater than this cold lucidity where “residues of meaning” still remain. This is the world of poetry which along gives the apocalyptic vision. Hence, the clarity of sight given by philosophy and science is not enough. It is not substitute for the world of myth represented by poetry which alone has the “gift of multivalence”.

It enacts an impressive ritual in which the mother’s reaction towards the end to her own suffering ironically cancels out earlier responses both primitive and sophisticate the inter relationship between the domestic tragedy and the surrounding immunity is unobtrusively established the poem also demonstrates the effective use of parallelism.

3.3.5. Allegory

Abram defines that “an allegory is narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the “literal”, or primary level of signification on, and at the same time to signify a second correlated order of significations.”

Nissim Ezekiel has used allegorical style in his poetry so he exemplifies this in the poem ‘Enterprise’. This poem is an allegory or a parable. A group of men set out on journey in pursuit of a certain goal. The very idea that they are going to achieve a lofty purpose has an ennobling and exalting effect on their minds. As they travel onwards, the sun beats down upon them but they have enough endurance and patience in them to withstand the heat of the sun. Indeed, the spokesmen of the group thinks that they have stood the heat and the discomfort very well they
take note of everything around them as they go on wards. They observe the things and the commodities which the peas and its sell and buy they observe the behavior of serpents and of goats and they observe the behavior of serpents and of three cities where a sage had delivered his learned discourses. All this is an a allegorical way of saying that a group of intellectuals way of saying that a group of intellectuals inducing poets have got engaged in an elaborate, arduous, and cooperative exercise to exercise to achieve the highest possible proficiency, If not complete perfection, in their art.

Chetan Karnani says, “Enterprise is another fine poem which shows his lyrical gift of expression written as a generalized allegory of the pilgrimage theme, it treats a journey as a metaphor for life, in this journey the poet talks about the various bickering that lead to a sense of futility. A group of persons go to a primitive hinter land and take copious notes. But differences crop up on how to cross a desert patch this leads to divisions within the group.”

After this, the journey loses its symbolic significance and becomes merely to graphical. They urge and the enthusiasm for the inner meaning wear out. At the end, there is complete disillusion met the final stanza raise the question: was the journey worth this struggle? Another stage in the adventurous journey is reached when the travelers are attacked, not once, but twice, and when they loses their way A group of travelers claim their freedom of action and express their wish to leave the group poet tries to pray for the success of their mission while the leader of the members of the group notice nothing remarkable as they go onwards But now they are only a small crowd of persons having no hope. They do not pay any need even to the thunder which had certain significance but which has now become meaningless to them. They are all feeling exhausted by the journey erect. They do not even have some of the necessities of life like soap.

Srinivasa Iyngar says that “In a sense, of course, its man’s destiny to be forever evolving and hence to be unfinished. There is movement a growth something is gained but something is lost also If the intellect acquires a sharper edge, something else perhaps imagination, perhaps hope or self-confidence suffers in consequence Between the emotion and the act falls the shadow and so poem like ‘Enterprise’ become images of frustration; the pilgrimage becomes a weary trek by the time the goal is reached.”

3.3.6. Irony
Abram defines that “Irony is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensible expressed. The Ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation but with indications in the overall speech situation that the speaker intends as very different and often opposite, attitude or evaluation.” [Abram 135]

The use of irony is one of the most outstanding features of the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. An early poem, ‘Background, Casually’ is an excellent example of his use of irony to achieve comic effects and to hit targets of criticism. In the very opening line of this poem he ironically describes himself as poet rascal-clown. The irony becomes more marked as the poem proceeds. Ezekiel describes himself as a student in a Roman Catholic school in the following manner;

A mugging Jew among the wolves

They told me I had killed the Christ (BC -34)

But the irony become vegan more conspicuous when he writes that, as a student accused of having killed the Christine, he own the scripture prize in the same year.

Ezekiel is not only ironical while depicting his school-fellows becoming to the Christian, Muslim, and Hindu communities but even in depicting him. He says that, at home, on Friday nights the prayers were said, and the family felt that his morals had been defining. He had asked himself if he could grow into a rabbi-saint, but the more he searched for an answer, the less he found. The irony continues when Ezekiel says that a friend had to pay the fare for his passage to England, and that philosophy, poverty and poetry were the three companions who shared his basement room in London.

The irony becomes more pungent when he tells us that he returned to India in a cargo-ship which was English but which carried French guns to be delivered to the authorities in Indo-china, and when he further tells us that he had felt compelled to take up a menial job and scrub the decks of that ship in order to pay for his pass he bake to India, more irony comes in the lines;

Married,

Changed jobs, and saw myself a fool. (CP-136)
The irony still continues; and the closing lines are ironical too. Ezekiel tells us that he is committed to living to India which he ironically describes as a revote and backward place, adding:

“My backward place is where I am” (CP-181)

Another poem, ‘Night of the Scorpion’ contains its full share or irony. Here Ezekiel tells us that the peasants came to his mother’s house like swarms of flies and buzzed the name of god a hundred times to paralyze the evil one, and that they came with candles and with lanterns throwing giant.

In the poem, ‘The Visitor’, Ezekiel again pokes fun at a superstition and he does so through the device of irony there times a crow cawed at the poet’s window, with baleful eyes fixed. On his eyes, with its wings slightly rise in a sinister posies, and its neck craned like a nagging woman. The crow seemed to fill the poet’s room with its voice and its presents. Having heart the crow is cawing three times. The poet prepared himself to deal effectively with the visitor who would come to see him and whose arrival had been conveyed to him in advance by the crows cawing. He wondered whether his visitor would be an angel in disguise or some devil in disguise.

The poem ‘Good bye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’ the poet has ironically depicted the mistake of tense and other mistakes of tense and other mistakes which most of the Indians make in speaking English language. The speaker here uses the present continuous tense where a simple present tense is needed. Apart from this frequent mistake, the habit of the Indians to give extravagant praise at farewell parties to the departing persons has also been ridiculed through the dens of Irony, Ezekiel has used the same weapon, namely Irony, in several other poems to emphasize the mistakes which these semi educated or ill-educated ill –educated Indians make in the course of their conversation through the medium of the English language the whole poem has been written in a spirit of mockery and Irony to enable us to have a hearty laugh at the Indian peoples distortion of the English language. But we can have a hearty laugh if we ourselves do not make such mistakes. The chances are that may among ourselves make mistakes of this kind. Apart from that, we would like to point out that, even If the Indians speak English in correctly, it does not matter as long as they are able to communicate with foreign visitors and among themselves. It is the good fortune of this country that most Indians have pleased enough English
to be able to converse with foreigners a majority of whom to have knowledge of English. But for this capacity to speak English even if it is spoken incorrectly a Punjabi would not be able to communicate with a Maharashtrian family would not able to communicate with a Gujarati, and so on But for this knowledge of English, even though it may be inadequate or ungrammatical, the different state of India would have remained linguistically cut off From one mother.

Actually irony, wit, humour, mockery and satire are inter-woven into each other. And Nissim Ezekiel has used this language element in his major poems, ‘The Railway Clerk’ this is one of the several poems, written by Nissim Ezekiel which at once amuse us and move us in another words, we have here a combination of humor and pathos. The pathos rises, of course, from the laborious life which the railway clerk has to lead, while the humor arises from the manner in which he describes his circumstances. The accumulation of the grievances has a pathetic effect but the disconnected and random stated amuses us. It is a very realistic poem with each detail being perfectly true to the fact of life. The chief source of humor in this poem is Ezekiel’s use of English Exactly in this poem is Ezekiel’s use of English exactly in the manner in which an Indian railway clerk would use it.

There are a few touches of Irony in the ‘Poem of the Separation’ the general tone of which is one of sadness. There is irony in the speakers saying that any man may be a whirl wind and any woman lighting, but that they have to be taken to their meeting place by buses or by trains the irony mere lies in the passion of the lovers being depicted as having been kept in check by the need to take bus or train we have here a comic contrast between the intensity of passion and the necessity to make use of such ordinary means of transport as a bus or a train. Then the speaker also speaks here about the “city of his birth and rebirth being squalid and crude while his beloved was a source of comfort to him and then there is Irony in the concluding two lines in which the beloveds decision to play with fire and get burnt has been state .

The Lord is playing

With streamers of fire,

I want to play with fire

Let me get burnt [PS -39]

The poem ‘The Couple' there is lot of wit in this poem and there is lot of irony in it;
To love her was impossible,
To abandon her unthinkable.
He had to make love to her,
A charade of passion and possession
In which some truth was found in her. [TC -44]

The Irony is most evident in the lines in which the author says that woman’s false love became in fused with true love only while actually make love

Her false love became infused with trust love

Only in making love [TC-44]

The Idea here is that the woman became genuinely involved in the sexual intercourse through her show of love for the man was only a presence. There was thus a curious combination of genuineness and falsehood in the woman’s dealing with the man. As for the man he wanted only to get on with his business of achieving the fullest possible satisfaction of his bodily cravings.

‘Nudes’, here is a most amusing poem. In this case the woman is ironically described as a shy one she has become to meet the speaker after he had urged her to come to him in his two letters to her and brief telephone call. When she comes she brings a few gifts for him. Then she behaves as if she were a very reserved kind of woman who would not like to become too intimate with a man and would, in any case refrain from any sexual relationship with him saying that she has come because of her desire to know what kind of a man he is she also suggests that he should meet her from time to time but often the man does not waste any time and undresses her quickly. Her reaction to his action is that she herself would not have made the first move but that she would not now mind his performing the sexual act with her because he has taken the character of a so called “shy” woman who is, in fact, impatient to enjoy a sexual experience and who yet pretends that she would not take the initiative in a matter of this kind.

Irony arises of woman’s strange preferred. It is about a woman who wanted her lover to wear expensive underclothes while visiting other women in order to have sexual intercourse with them bit who wanted him to wear his older pieces when visiting her for the same purpose she was a rich woman who used to spend money freely on this lover of hers, and who now gave him
a present of new and costly underclothes, she wanted him to wear the older undergarment made him more desirable to her. This poem again shows Nissim Ezekiel’s gift of wit and irony. He is here laughing at, or poking fun at, the strange tastes of women so far as sexual relations with men are concerned. Ezekiel is not here writing about the faithful, chaste wives who behave in a routine, mechanical manner which becomes habitual with them after a few years of married life. He is here depicting the loose women who believe in brief encounters with men or who believe only in a short term sexual relationship. In the poem entitled ‘Two Night of Love’, the speaker speaks ironically about his craving to make love to his beloved of the moment soon after having already made love to her and it is in a vein of irony that the speaker speaks about “threshing thighs” and the singing breasts “of the woman. The poem entitled “marriage” irony has been employed to expose the fleeting nature of the love which had brought the lovers together in marriage.

Nissim Ezekiel’s using of irony in poem, ‘Background, Casually’, He says that “the stand point of Ezekiel is that of a highly educated cultured and polished man not belonging to any extreme of society and that such a stand point is conductive to the development of an iron is attitude. Ezekiel’s autobiographical poem Background, casually. The poet rascal clown in this poem finds himself a misfit, unable to fly even a kite while every other boy is flying one. He borrows a top which refuses to spin. He is a mugging Jew among the wolves. His school fellows accuse him of having killed Christ but, Ironically, he wins a scripture –prize In London a woman comes to him one day to tell his willing ears that he is the son of man the use of capital letters in the case of the words woman son and man is significant because it enhances the irony of the situation A woman has come to tell him that he is the son of man as if he were himself unaware of this fact. The phrase “son of man” reminds us of the phrase “son of God” and the suggestion makes the irony mere more forceful. Irony becomes even more intense when Ezekiel says that, looking around him now, he tries to formulate a plainer view which is that the wise individuals survive and serve to play the fool and that such individuals try to cash in on the inner and the outer forms.

The poem ‘In India’ provides a good example of his use of irony;

The Roman Catholic Goan boys

The whitewashed Anglo -Indian boys
The muscle bound Islamic boys

Were earnest in their prayers. [CP-132]

The earnestness of the boys in their prayers which cut across boundaries of religion and grace is neatly demolished by the very first line of the succeeding stanza: “they copied bullied, stole in pairs”. The work of demolition is taken further in the next two lines;

They bragged about their love affairs

They carved the table, broke the chairs.(CP-132)

The last line of the stanza, “but never missed their prayers”, attempts a reconstruction which, coming as it does after the lines preceding it, is obviously fabric. The of demolition is continued in the third stanza:

The Roman Catholic Goan boys

Confessed their solitary joys

Confessed their games with high – heeled toys. (CP-132)

‘The Truth about the Flood’ presents another example of Ezekiel’s use of Irony:

A villager speaks:

I have eleven children,

Two I have left to the mercy of God.

The rest are begging, somewhere. [CP -186]

The point here is that there is hardly any difference between being “left to the mercy of God” and “begging somewhere” unless, of course, the former is interpreted to carry the specific meaning of being dead what is just humors in the second line becomes pathetic in the third and Ironic by the time the stanza closes.

At the closure of ‘Advice to Painter’, the Ironic effect is achieved in an even more simple way;

Be voracious with your eyes and appetites;

the will to see, the passion in the act of love
or learning lead to brighter prospects

In landscape, still life, nude, abstract,

and also higher prices. [CP -205]

The poem ‘The Way It Went’, shows Nissim Ezekiel’s gift of wit and Irony, when he and his wife went away on a honeymoon, he wondered why the honey moon was so called , and this is indeed amusing because we ourselves do not know why a newly married couple , going away from relatives and from time to enjoy the initial pleasure of sex should call this trip and their stay at a distant place a “honeymoon” “But the chief source of humors in this poem is the authors account of the rapidity with which the years passed, bringing him his first child, his subsequent children , the marriage of the eldest daughter , and the birth of a grandchild. And we certainly laugh and laugh when the author thinks himself “damned” we laugh certainly, but use also feel that he is right and that a large majority of us are damned too in the same way. And the touch of pathos lies in the fact that marriage has its difficulties and its problems, one of them being the inadequacy of our financial resources to meet of our financial resources to meet the ever increasing household expenses

3.3.7. Imagery

“Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense eruption referred to in a poem or other work of literature whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles of its similes and metaphors.” [Abram-121]35

Time, space, sound, light, the human body, dream, movement – Imagery of these makeup of the fabric of Ezekiel’s verse. This is not to suggest that these are the only images in Ezekiel poetry, in fact, a striking aspect of Ezekiel poetry is its breadth of imagery. The study of imagery in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel assumes that: The images are beautiful birds and colorful fish; they fly, they swim in Jewish consciousness.

But the question is what an image means. In the simplest terms, it means, a picture made out of words and with it poet can say more than want meets our eyes and ears. It is usually expressed through a phrase, an epithet, a metaphor and a simile. An epithet, a metaphor, simile may create an image or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or a passage on the face of it purely descriptive, but conveying to us something more than the accurate reflection of an
external reality. The greatest imagist Ezra pound has said: “An image is that which present an intellectual and emotional complex in instant of time.” 36 [Paul’s. 87].

Broadly speaking, imagery tends to be graphic, visual or expressive in effete, and it is used for conveying it is very useful towards concretization of emotions and obliquity of expressions. Vividness, compactness and concentration constitutes are it shall marks. It is very effective in avoiding direct statements in poetry, as Hugh Kenner has remarked, “Any image is by its nature more vivid than any statement.” [Hugh. 28]37

It is not to suggest here that Ezekiel is as much addicted to the drug of imagery as the imagists were but it is also true that imagery is the hallmark of poetry. He further uses imagery sparingly and judiciously and his images remain strictly functional rather than decorative some images in Ezekiel poetry are repeatedly used and they acquire symbolic overtones for the use of imagery the collections of Ezekiel’s poetry, viz. The unfinished man, Hymns in Darkness, and Latter-Day psalms notable for employing Imagery at appropriate times. The opening piece in Hymns in Darkness, ‘Subject of Change’ makes a beautiful use of simile, metaphor and figurative expression in merely twenty lines. For metaphor and figurative application of language, we may mark the very first stanza:

The evening walk proved not to be
A long the shore of memory,
I edged towards a different light;
The fevers of future night. [CP.177]

Here “the shore of memory” is a striking metaphor and the fevers of future night are both provocative and figurative. The last stanza of the poem brings out a very apt comparison:

The waves
Rise and fall like nightmare graves
That cannot hold their dead, the sky
Is smaller than this open eye. [CP. 177]

Obliviously, Ezekiel appears to be searching for the object and their exact description to a common reader, the last line may appear to be hyperbolic or startling, but it is definitely a very
apt description of the geography of Bombay, which is so inescapably surrounded by the sea water.

In other poem, too, Ezekiel uses Metaphors and similes exceedingly well such as in ‘Poem of the Separation’, ‘Guru, Distance’, ‘London’, ‘Tone Poems’. From ‘Poem of the Separation’, the illustrations of metaphor and simile suffice here to indicate Ezekiel’s poetic and evocative power. In this poem he compares “spring of worlds”, to “women’s eyes”, which provides him with the similar pleasure but he gains the pleasure from the one in composing and from the other in his personal life.

One may guess at the aptness and the alertness of the poet’s mind by looking at the following comparison in the ‘Tone Poem’:

You breast are small,
Tender
Like your feeling. (CP. 203)

The above lines, the poet does not go anywhere beyond the subject of his treatment for an arresting simile. This shows the alertness of the poet’s mind. Obviously, Ezekiel has compared the “tenderness” of a woman’s, the beloved’s, breasts with the “tenderness” of her “Feelings”. But while the “breasts” are tangible and visible, “feelings” are not. By this analogy, the poet has tried to explore the universe of quality.

The poem ‘Urban’ deals with the city life and mechanical movements and actions of its inhabitants, the city here becomes a symbol of distracting noises, “Kindred clamour” and “shadows of the night”. A very graphic picture of it has been painted by the poet in the following lines:

The city like a passion burns
He dreams of morning walks, alone
And floating on a wave of sand. [CP. 117]

These lines bring both simile and metaphor together, producing a harmonious effect on the reader’s mind, in truth the city of Bombay is a brooding figure throughout the volume The Unfinished Man and seems to haunt the poet inescapably it comes out as the central metaphor in
this work this becomes clear when one reads a poem like ‘A Morning Walk’, which portrays the banal and despairing influence of the city on the poet’s perception. Ezekiel calls the city:

Cold and dim
Where only human hands sell cheap
It is barbaric city sick with slums
deprived of seasons. [CP. 120]

The poem ends in note of disenchantment and disillusion meant by pointing out that a busy man of the city where “Fame is cheap” plays a role of “an active fool throughout his life”.

The poem ‘Enterprise’ which is fine illustration of the role of poet – Pilgrim to his creator, is significant for the study here, in as mucks as it uses the metaphor of pilgrimage. According to German “It is a journey from city to primitive hinterland”.38 [133].

According to John the poet is ill here because of his “copious notes. He yearns for his journey only to his home: “Home is where we to earn our grace. Ezekiel has undoubtedly used this metaphor elsewhere in the poems A Time to change, something to pursue, ‘communication’, and “The worm”, where he seems to point out that the pilgrimage becomes more a myth than reality.” 39 [J.118]

In The Exact Name, the poem, ‘Night of the Scorpion’, treats a sad yet familiar family situation; that of the singing the poet’s mother by a poisonous scorpion. The poem depicts the superstitions peasants as “swarms of flies”. The peasants came like swarms of flies and buzzed the Name of God a hundred times to paralyze the Evil one. The verb “Buzzed” extends the smile “like swarms of flies” in the second line Thanks to the use of onomatopoeia, etc. “Buzzed” a simile become imagistic. Other poems in this volume as ‘In India’, and ‘Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher’ are known for association of ideas.

In the collection of Latter-Day Psalms, we find delicious feast of concrete, sensuous, pointed, pertinent and functional imagery at appropriate places. The little pieces contain some fine flashes of fancy through simile, metaphor and figurative expression. Moreover, the expressions as the wine of astonishment and the bread of sorrow are very aptly handled.
Many of Ezekiel’s images assume the nature of symbols in his poetry and such images are few and far between of such recurring images, we may mention the images of journey or pilgrimage, woman, city, nature, basement room, etc. since we have already examined the image of pilgrimage while discussing. The poem ‘Enterprise’ now we take others. The image of woman is generally associated with animosity and sexuality, with corruption and defilement. The pagan woman as frequently painted by the poet becomes an embodiment of sensuousness and sensuality.

Another recurring image is that of the putrid city, which together with the image of the pagan woman completes the picture of debased and defiled human life. Both the interrelated images thus become symbol of banality on the one hand, the image of the city commitment, robust sense of belonging and, on the other hand, it should that he is not blind to its filth and squalor, its debasement and distractions most of the poems in The Unfinished Man have the city as the dominant metaphor, such as ‘Urban’, ‘A Morning Walk’ and ‘Case Study’. Ezekiel sees the city of Bombay burning “Like a passion”. He also looks upon it as “cold and dim barbaric”, and “marshy”, and also as a place where labor and fame are too cheap the following extract from ‘Minority Poems’ will tell a lot of about the poet’s general attitude towards the city.

Nature is another recurrent image in Ezekiel’ poetry, standing all for purity and tranquility in contradiction to the image of the city. For the poet, nature is manifestation of the glory and greatness of the Almighty, and it is through her that a man can understand the essential truth. Ezekiel goes to the world of nature, and draws the fresh and vital images of will, rivers, wind, skies, sun moon and rain in his poetry. In his poem ‘Morning Prayer’, he prays to the Lord thus:

God grant me certainty
In kinship with the sky,
Air, earth, fire, sea-
And the fresh inward eye. [CP.122]

According to K. D Verma, “the nature images are the archetypal life symbols”. “They project a pastoral vision of a fully refulgent and harmonious life, a pattern in which man enters in to
sacred communion with his cosmos, including objects of Nature, as metaphorical condition of his integrated humanity and of his desire to foster a community of being.”  

The image of the basement room is also frequent employed in his poetry. In fact Ezekiel was in England for his higher courses in philosophy between 1948 and 1952. There he lived in a basement room with his three professed companions – ‘Poverty Poetry and Philosophy’. The “Basement room” thus becomes a metaphor for the poets struggle for artistic creation.

Ezekiel is definitely successful in making the harmonious total impression on the mind of the reader by means of his subtly related images. Paul Smith remarked the statement of Ezra Pound “imagery clearly focuses on Ezekiel aim It is better to present on image in lifetime than to produce voluminous works and by now we know that Ezekiel has created more than one image of lasting worth to make himself immortal in the annals of contemporary Indian English poetry.”

To sum up, Ezekiel’s imagery is usually un decorative and functional with the basic qualities, polyphonic rhythm, verse libre and in his poetry he uses it wherever necessary and the total effect is remarks The greatest of Imagery does not lie in the use, however, beautiful and reveling of is old image but in the harmonious total impression produced by a succession of subtly related images.

3.3.8. Economy in Spoken Language

The following lines of Ezekiel’s poem, from ‘The Egoist Prayers’ show Ezekiel poetic language at its best,

No, Lord,
No my motive of action
Is my motive
But do you really mind
Half a bite of it?
It tastes so sweet,
And I’m so hungry. (CP-112)
Ezekiel has tried to bring the idiom of poetry closer to the spoken language sometimes his lines read like lines from John Donne’s poem. He claims to have written much simpler poetry than others; and in this connection he has said; Even the most complex of my poems are relatively simple and direct, Judged by the norms of difficult poetry properly so called’ do contain some abstract thoughts and vague expressions like ‘Philosophy’ and ‘Perspective’ do contain some abstract thoughts and vague expressions like “myth of light” and parables of hell but most often his phraseology, like his Ideas possesses the quality of concreteness.

3.3.9. Lucidity and Colloquial Style

Nissim Ezekiel used lucidity and colloquial style in his poetry. Philosophy is the poet’s example of lucidity.

“There is a place to which I often to,
Not by planning to but buy a flow,
Away from all existence to a cold Lucidity….. (SP-56)

According to Chetan Karnanil “He loves the cold lucidity of logic. He does believe in science and ruthless logic but there are worlds greater than this cold lucidity where ‘residue of meaning’ still remain. This is the world of poetry which alone gives the apocalyptic vision.” 42

The poem begins with Ezekiel’s telling us that philosophy is the place to which he often goes, not by planning or by a conscious effort, but spontaneously and naturally as if that is the place which he visits instinctively. Philosophy he says, is the place where ‘the mills of God are here slow’ meaning that philosophy is fertile producer of ideas. Absorbed in Philosophy, he finds himself removed from his usual environment and in fact from all existence. At same time he has the feeling that philosophy is a domain of “cold lucidity” meaning that it is a world in which the ideas are crystal clear but which is devoid of the warmth of human emotions. The philosopher arrives at certain conclusions by the use of logic and reasoning; but the process is a cold one involving only the intellect and debarring the entry of any emotion or feeling.

Another writing style of Ezekiel is colloquial and conversational. The poem ‘Night of the Scorpion’ demonstrates a deliberate attempt at formal innovation by using a loose seemingly free-verse narrative structure. It is much more relaxed and openly worked than Ezekiel’s formal poetry with a new quality of natural colloquialism in diction and tone. We notice in the poem the
abandonment of capitals at the start of each line, the dramatic casualness of the recalled crisis, the long paragraph set of abruptly from the tree-line climax, all of which gives ‘Night of the scorpion’. A new feel, a sense of unhurried lucid progression through time it is an interesting and very valid poem, containing a fascinating tension between personal crisis and making so vile observation, but the discrepancies of form confuse the tone which swings between the natural and the colloquial reporting of experience and more removed literary formality. And yet, for all the problems, a real voice is heard in this poem, with its own rhythms and cadences. According to Rama Kundu “the poems ‘Situation’ and ‘A short Story’ bring Ezekiel’s use of colloquial idioms and conversational poetic style.”

The poem ‘Philosophy’ Dr Raghukul Tilak writes “It is one of the more difficult lyrics of Nissim Ezekiel it is meditative, reflective poem, it states the superiority of poetry over philosophy. It published in The Exact Name In 1965, and stands in the very beginning of that collection. It is divided in to four stanzas of five lines, each with a well-marked rhyme –scheme aabba. The language is simple and colloquial throughout the difficulty of this lyric arises not from its diction but from the profundity and complexity of the content.”

In his poem entitled, ‘Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher’ Ezekiel has written, The best poets wait for words /The hunt is not an exercise of will /But patient love relaxing on a hill “Indeed Ezekiel had made a valuable contribution to has also made a substantial contribution to the use of colloquial English and the conversational manner and tone in Indo –English poetry. The whole of his autographical poem ‘Background, Casually’, is written in a conversational tone and the poem entitled ‘The Way it Went’ is a good example of his use of colloquial English. Further more, he is equally at home in writing metrical and non-metrical verse ,and his poems , written in metrical lines and his poems written in “ verse libre “ are also a contribution to the technique of writing poetry.

3.3.10. Symbol

Abram says that in the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something in this sense all words are symbols in discussing literature, however, the term “symbol is applied only to word or phrase that signifies and object or event which in its turn signifies something , or has a range of reference , beyond itself.” [p. 311]
Few of the poems of Nissim Ezekiel show symbolical element, it indicates poems deepest meaning. The pilgrimage in “Enterprise “can be said to symbolize life itself. The crowd of pilgrims could stand form the individual and life is seen as a journey undertaken by a group of one, a communal Endeavour which begins with excitement but concludes in disillusionment. The journey is also symbolic of the voyage into ones inner self, the voyage of self –exploration Home symbolizes the place where one lives, as also ones inner self.

In ‘Night of the Scorpion’ flash of diabolic tail in the dark room is symbolic of the evil that pervades the world and against which all created things have to wage an ever – continuing struggle and which can be overcome only by an integrated approach.

The woman the city and nature are the ever recurring images in Ezekiel poetry, and by repetition they acquire symbolic overtones. They are the key images but round these are usually woven a number of associative images, and in this way we get a cluster of images which enlarge the expressive range and vigor of the language. There is frequent recurrence of the image of the pagan woman who is a great beast of sex she is symbolic of mean passion, earthly corruption, and defilement.

Actually, Ezekiel is not a symbolist poet, but as he himself says, city woman and nature certainly lend themselves to symbolic imagery. Animals, birds and beasts are also part of purity, innocence and goodness, and so are contrasted with the defiled man, corrupted by life in the city.

Many of Ezekiel images assume the nature of symbols in his poetry, and such images are few and far between so, According to K. D. Verma, “the nature images are the archetypal life symbol. They project a pastoral vision of a fully refulgent and harmonious life, a pattern in which man enters into sacred communion with this cosmos, including objects of Nature, as metaphorical condition of his integrated humanity and of his desire to foster a community of being.”

The poem ‘Urban’ deals with the city life and mechanical movements and actions of its inhabitants. he city here becomes a symbol of distracting noises, “ Kindred clamor” and “ shadows of the night , putrid city and the pagan woman both the interrelated images thus become symbol of corruption and banality.
The insects, serpents, birds, animals’ landscape and urban environment and society are the main sources of images and symbolism in men’s poetry. In Nissm Ezekiel’s ‘Night of the Scorpion’, scorpion with its diabolical tail is the symbol of vices and sins perpetrated in the past birth Lizard is the symbol of cleanliness, Perseverance and dutifulness, squirrel symbolizes agility and cat is the symbol croups, the saints of some hidden duty. According to Linda Hess, “He has emerged as most outstanding in craft man ship, maturity, range and depth of sensibility”.47 Also “Anisur Rehman says “Ezekiel is singularly aware of the craft of poetry and his own performance as a poet.” [14] 48


His careful choice of words is responsible for his frequent use of “alliteration” too. The use of alliteration is quite attractive in the following lines from his poem for ‘Satish Gujral’ for example

What does one do?
Whose loss
And liability
Loom as large as this? [JSAL-ix -3-4-108]

Here, the consonant ‘l’ occurs four times. Like wise, here are a few lines from one of his ‘Poster Poems’:

Contemplate
Your holds the secrets
Of nature and or art
Also of the self
Naked expressed
In bone, flesh, and form,
Flowing line
And flexibility [Ibid-126]

Here the consonant ‘f’ occurs four times in the last three lines.

Ezekiel use of “Paradox “is exemplified of in opening “where the speaker says “A man with drawn in to himself / may be a man moving forward [CP-163]

Another example is provided in ‘Dilemma’:

The further I move
Away from madness
Towards stability
And a measure of sense,
The closer I sense,
The closer I seem
To the verge of madness [CP -244]

The bleeding streets in ‘Song’ and the sobbing sky in ‘Episode’ exemplify Ezekiel’s use of pathetic fallacy psalm (psalm. 151) opens thus “ Light rebukes and sky abuses [cp-73] A catena of pathetic fallacies gives ‘Town Lore’ its textual unity;

This large sprawling town able
To cool it, soothed by the rain
No longer dare the mental roads
Menace the wayward vagabond
The wayside trees expectantly
Have filled the air with green
And hope of love.
Natural to this change
Natural to this timely change
Are kisses and the clear light of words
Emergent from the butt up past
The web of tramlines and the routes
of rushing buses melt into
one un barricaded road
That leads to you [CP -81]

The transferred “Epithets” found in Ezekiel’s poetry include “He walks the hard accustomed way [CP -87] In portrait and “bawdy darkness” [CP-107] in ‘Night and Day’.

Noisy silence and sly innocence in ‘In India’ and friendly for in Love poem are among the oxymoron used by Ezekiel.

By making the speaker in ‘Occupation’ listens to the rain, Ezekiel makes use of synesthesia other examples include “the melody of light” [CP-81] in ‘The Recluse’ and your gentle hands /were eloquent [CP-142], In ‘Love Poem’.

‘At the party’ provides an instance of Ezekiel use of “apostrophe” the poem opens thus.

He curbed his abstract insights with a will,
his proper answer softer than the drinks,
and scrutinized the women for the kill,
but as the evening moves, his spirit sinks [SP-98]

Ezekiel’s use of zeugma is exemplified in something to pursue when the female animal no longer / Haunts the bed in flesh or dream [CP18] “Night piece” makes striking use of the figure listening to rain or something in the sky made to carry death or wireless sets left on in fear the silence may be heard. In this way Nissim Ezekiel is pioneer of modern English literature in India.
So that he covers whole Indian situation. He has written many poems in English which are helpful to not only Indians but also foreigners to study English literature.

REFERENCES


35. Ibid, p. 121.